

LIFE WITHIN REASON



THE LIBERAL BOOK CLUB

"Freedom to Think, Freedom to Speak, Freedom to Act"

LIFE WITHIN REASON

by Ivor Brown

FUTURE FOR DEMOCRACY

by Ramsay Muir

POWER IN MEN

by Joyce Cary

LEADERSHIP FOR PLENTY

by Comyns Carr

THE CONTOURS OF LIBERTY

by Tom Harrisson

THESE MEN MAKE POLITICS

by A. J. Cummings

OWNERSHIP FOR ALL

by Elliott Dodds

*All these books 2/6 net
Published only for Members
of the Liberal Book Club*

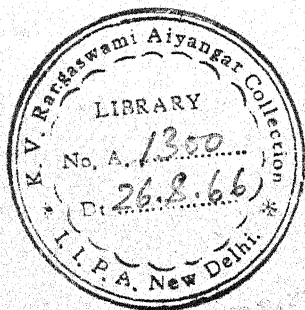
*See page 254 for further information
regarding the Liberal Book Club*

LIFE WITHIN REASON

By

IVOR BROWN

*Author of "The Meaning of Democracy,"
"English Political Theory," etc.*



PUBLISHED FOR
THE LIBERAL BOOK CLUB
BY
NICHOLSON & WATSON
LIMITED . . . LONDON

K. MANAKODEN, BOOKSELLER, MADRAS.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

41297
5813

First published in 1939

Made and Printed in Great Britain by
William Clowes and Sons, Limited, London and Beccles

THE LIBERAL BOOK CLUB

by

The Marquis of Crewe, K.G., *President*

I AM happy to write a word of introduction for the first volume issued by the Liberal Book Club. Mr. Ivor Brown sets the pace with a vigorous and thoughtful work giving evidence, as might be expected from him, of wide historical knowledge and of a fine taste in letters. He develops proof of the difficulties that now confront the holders of Liberal faith ; it is no longer a question of the struggle against feudal oppression, against caste and privilege, the glory of "sixteen quarterings," and the woes of a down-trodden peasantry. The dictatorships, whether Fascist, Nazi, or Communist, have equally set their faces against these, utilising some of the forms of Socialism without an attempt to realise the freedom and equality which once were elements in the Socialist programme, but never

FOREWORD

more than the baseless fabric of a vision. Mr. Ivor Brown makes it clear that although neither Conservatism nor Socialism in this country are seriously infected by the virus which afflicts the three great dictatorships, some of the smaller European countries are not immune, and in a degree it might be introduced here. It is the task, and no easy task, of Liberals to resist it by adapting our tried principles to the changing conditions of the world. These books will contribute to this end without overstressing the claims of party allegiance. In his masterly survey of the varied manifestations of power, Mr. Bertrand Russell observes "the difficulty of democracy, as a form of government, is that it demands a readiness for compromise." Mr. Ivor Brown in this book reminds us that "the democrat, like every one else, perhaps even more than every one else, must keep his sense of proportion." And he might have added that it is particularly difficult for him to do it without weakening his enthusiasm.



CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. CONCERNING PURPOSE	1
II. THEN AND NOW	25
III. DAWNS AND DARKNESS	47
IV. ON THE KNEE	73
V. HATRED AND FEAR	95
VI. TO SEE OURSELVES	118
VII. AIDS TO REASON	144
VIII. MIND AND MACHINES	170
IX. MACHINES AND BODIES	191
X. NEW MEANS TO OLD ENDS	211
XI. REASON WITHIN REACH	228
POSTSCRIPT	246

CHAPTER I

CONCERNING PURPOSE

THIS book is in no sense a precise Party document. Such a document, in any case, is least to be expected from a Party which is neither pedantic nor authoritarian and has always been glad to entertain all varieties of liberal thought, from the Whig's cult of freedom first to the Radical's insistence on rapid and drastic reform. The Liberal, making reason and liberty his abiding foundations, has always matched a developing policy to the developing needs of men and women in a changing world. Members of other parties would make no less a claim, but with less justice in so far as both Right and Left have their rigid lines of dogma to which the policy must be strictly attached, whatever the urgency of the moment.

No detailed programme is here presented. The idea is to consider the springs of political action as well as the objective. To make an

LIFE WITHIN REASON

outline of last things, *i.e.* the goal of policy, without a sufficient study of the first things, which are the motive and material of policy, has been too common a practice in the past. In the composition of political theory the psychology of man, viewed as a social animal attempting to govern or accepting government, has been sadly overlooked. The law in these matters has too often been laid down by well-intentioned intellectuals who suffer from a distressing confidence that all men share both their intentions and their intellect. I am the first to plead guilty on this count of exceeding the hope-limit. Nearly twenty years ago I wrote a book on *The Meaning of Democracy* which was typical of the egregious and ill-founded optimism then in fashion. Those were the times when everybody was mapping a New Jerusalem and nobody remembered the Old Adam. The assumptions about human nature in politics were grotesquely doctrinaire and childishly confident. My trust in the range and vigour of the rational faculties at work in an electorate was, I could only hope, well-expressed. It was certainly ill-founded.

CONCERNING PURPOSE

The present approach, accordingly, to what occurs in the political scene is that of a social observer who hopes that he has shed his too sanguine point of view, has realised the danger of being doctrinaire, and is now more modestly relating his experience of man's common conduct to his notions of what man might be, should he uncommonly improve on past performance. The history of the last two decades, which began with a dictated peace and will be lucky to end with any peace at all, has certainly been sobering enough and has cooled, even to freezing-point, all heat of youthful expectation. The experience employed in this book is simply that of any ordinary citizen who watches his fellows and reads the news. The opinions are those of one who likes the now rather old-fashioned name of Radical. The experience is often at variance with one's rosier hopes. The creed, the democratic creed, with its belief in the appeal to reason instead of the exploitation of superstition, stupidity, and passion, may have to be modified to meet the current phenomena of human nature in politics. But it will certainly not be abandoned. To be reasonable

LIFE WITHIN REASON

about reason is not to accept defeat and despair.

The idea that men and women are nothing but heads has been held by some large-minded but short-sighted theorists. We have recently had increasing cause to realise this fallacy. But to run to the opposite extreme and to deny the existence of heads at all, a denial which the present theory and practice of dictatorship do in fact make, is no less absurd than to conceive of man as Reason Embodied—and walking rapidly and steadily from Westminster to Utopia, from polling-booth to heaven-on-earth. That million-headed monster, the crowd, is not wholly misnamed. It has its million heads. These heads, in democratic opinion, are not equal in content or capacity, but they are equal in the right to be considered. They shall be counted, not broken, when decisions have to be made, and, as a preparation for choice, they shall be kept open to all forms of truth and not closed and sealed by one species of propaganda. The verdicts to be reached by agreement should not, in execution, be oppressive to those who disagree. A fanatic of majority

CONCERNING PURPOSE

rule might hold that the larger number is rightly empowered to humiliate, persecute, and torture the lesser, but a wise democracy is as scrupulous in limiting the sovereignty of a major group over its minors as it is resolute to make that popular sovereignty effective over the claims of cliques and individuals. The decent bounds to majority rule must be as much regarded as the basic right of majorities to make their declared will prevail.

The chief enemies of such a common-sense and liberal-minded government directed towards the general utility are no longer the Die-Hard supporters of place, privilege, and monopoly. It may be that Radicalism will once again have to search the old Tory coverts and disarm the lordly nuisances still lurking with an ancestral blunderbuss in the Backwoods and the Last Ditch. But a far more serious enemy has since risen in lowlier places. It is the Village Blacksmith who now forges and brandishes the Roman Steel : it is the Corporal who out-Herods any Kaiser and wields a power never dreamed of by old Emperors of France and Germany. They have won their way by

LIFE WITHIN REASON

power of will, which a Radical can admire, and far more, by debauching the people with emotional appeals, a method which Radicalism cannot endure. Above all, these men hate reason and liberty with equal ferocity. Hitler's confessions in *Mein Kampf* are perfectly candid and explicit in their advocacy of an appeal to the lowest intelligence and the most excitable type. Dictatorship lives on hysteria and on that stimulation of racial pride and passion which turns the calculating citizen into the impulsive member of a mob. The new, half-deified leaders foster Cæsarism and hero-worship and exploit the human instinct for grovelling and adoration with the utmost skill. One would think that they had taken their political training in the frenzied world of the films where the salesmanship of personality has been so cunningly developed. They may rage against the Jews, but surely it was the clever Jews of Hollywood who taught them the art and craft of publicity and self-projection.

The Radical has no objection to Great Men—provided they are genuinely great and are willing to remain men. Nor does he distrust the Mass

CONCERNING PURPOSE

—provided it consists of individuals and is not turned, by a bogus philosophy, into a Mystical Personality, the Proletarian Giant and Sovereign before whose General Will all personal rights must vanish. The Radical knows that he must work with Men who lead and Masses who follow: but he will worship neither. What is murdering democracy to-day is not the old oppression from on top but the abject deification from below. To that extent the political problems for progressive people have enormously altered. It is not a generation since the popular parties all over the world considered themselves to be in some sort of unity and even alliance: they were ranged against their oppressors of the old blood or the new wealth. To a somewhat dismal tune they sang on ceremonial occasions that "The Internationale Unites the Human Race." That spirit and that force have been tragically and utterly broken. The appeal to Race-Consciousness has, over huge areas of Europe, routed the appeal to Class-Consciousness. The Socialist Internationale, always shadowy, is now a shade in the ghostly sense. We never realised, thirty years ago, how strong

LIFE WITHIN REASON

this call of race could be and the amount of humiliation and self-sacrifice which supposedly civilised and educated members of the working-class would endure for the sake of nationalist symbols and slogans. We have now to reshape our political ideas to meet the urgency of that colossal surrender, the collapse of the up-standing democrat, and the triumph of the deifiers on bended knee.

The Fascist dictators are Socialists of a sort. While they utilise, are polite to, and may even permit to be richly rewarded, the capitalist-manufacturer, they admit no respect for the capitalist-financier, whom they put in the special category of shame associated with usurers and Jews. They are not at all prepared to be bullied by bankers, and their ability to break all the rules of orthodox finance and yet carry on with their gigantically expensive programmes has considerably perplexed the professors of economics and mandarins of fiscal correctness in democratic countries. They appear to be free from snobbishness, which cannot always be said of popular champions, and like to regard themselves and to be regarded as more

CONCERNING PURPOSE

authentic Men of the People and Friends of the Poor than are the leaders and statesmen of the so-called "Pluto-democracies." Hitler has been especially eager to claim and to emphasise his proletarian origins, sufferings, and sympathies. Nor can it be denied that both Hitler and Mussolini, who despise "bourgeois democracy" quite as heartily as any Marxian commissar, have a far more intimate acquaintance with poverty and a far closer experience of working-class life and problems than have our Labour leaders, Major Attlee, Dr. Hugh Dalton, and Mr. Arthur Greenwood. That is not cited as any fault or weakness of the latter in their present positions. But the humble origins of the Dictators have undoubtedly helped them in their acquisition of supreme domination over the humble millions. Where a Kaiser failed, a painter wins. What these men will ultimately achieve for their working-class supporters remains to be seen. At present there is no reason for their followers to combine with their grovelling and their goose-steps the leaps of ecstasy and flings of triumph.

The urgent point for the moment is the

LIFE WITHIN REASON

dictators' estimate of general psychology, because that estimate has been, in their cases, so abundantly justified by facts and results. They challenged the proletarian assumption that "The People's Flag is Deepest Red" and proved it, outside of Russia, to be Palest Pink. They waived aside the claim of the Internationale to unite the human race. Flattering the workers of their countries as the heirs and assigns of National Glory, they handed them up to plinths and pedestals where they could be gracefully posed as the Aryan Hero, full of blonde beauty and masculine vigour, or the Noble Roman, legatee of all the Cæsars' might and so due to recover all the Cæsars' power and glory and dominion. With these simple tricks they easily broke through the old Socialist ideals of Labour's economic unity, class loyalty, and solidarity of interest. The cause of that collapse we shall have closely to analyse.

Meanwhile the despairing search for "Peace in Our Time" has brushed aside the campaign for "Socialism in Our Time." But, if peace endures, that campaign will naturally come again. The Radical will take it, as he takes

CONCERNING PURPOSE

all such creeds and crusades, on its merits. Words and formulæ are not intoxicants to him, and he will offer neither sneers nor salaams when the "Nationalisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange" is once more put forward. (He might suggest that Labour preaching be done in the decent English of Cobbett and Blatchford instead of the Latinised jargon of the Fabians.) He does not distrust collective action as such: his individualism is not doctrinaire, but a matter of trial and error and consequent selection. The extent to which the community should collectively organise its affairs of trade and administration must, in his opinion, vary enormously from subject to subject, from place to place, and from year to year.

He will probably take the view that collective action is most valuable in the sphere of distribution, where it can eliminate superfluous and competing services and effect reasonable economies without limiting the consumer's effective choice of article. That is the direction in which modern economic procedure is moving. We do not collectivise the creative side of

LIFE WITHIN REASON

farming : but we are attempting to organise on a national basis the marketing of farm products and the costing and distribution of such a vital and national necessity as milk. The Radical retains an open mind on the best methods of fitting large-scale supply to national demand. He neither accepts Socialism as a magic word nor trembles at it as before a bogey. The problems of the best way to adjust services to needs he believes must be solved by practical experiment and experience so that the general advantage of producers and consumers may be reached in a sound, utilitarian way.

A singularly important point at present is the number of middlemen in most industries and the profits they are able to make. Why is it, he will ask, that a drastic fall in prices for the farmer and the market-gardener has almost no influence on prices at the butcher's or the greengrocer's shop ? Between the summer of 1937 and that of 1938 the price of English lambs obtainable by the farmer was virtually halved, falling from around three pounds to around thirty shillings. But the price of a joint of English lamb had scarcely fallen a

CONCERNING PURPOSE

penny a pound at the time that it came to the purchaser's kitchen. That sort of wasteful inefficiency, not to say robbery, in our national life has to be remedied. But it will not be done by shouting vaguely for Socialism on the one side or roaring about gross interference with individual rights on the other.

The Radical is generally supposed to be a great stickler for rights. But here again he is not doctrinaire. He does not conceive the new-born babe as arriving with a neat label of "Free and Equal" tied round his infant neck, as was the pleasing fantasy of the eighteenth-century romantics like Rousseau. This business of rights has to be faced in a practical, unsentimental way. That men and women should have rights is only right : but they must not be vague, abstract, undefined things, but concrete propositions about powers and enjoyments accompanied by equally concrete propositions about duties. Equality of civic rights the Radical champions : equality of wealth and influence he believes to be desirable in so far as it can be achieved without a deadening and dictatorial regimen, which destroys ambition,

LIFE WITHIN REASON

inhibits faculties, and denies personality. A harsh, mathematical Equality, violently imposed and sustained by an iron discipline of spying, delation, confiscation, and repression, is an obvious denial of freedom and is as great a menace to decent living as any system of caste and privilege.

The Radical believes in the individual and holds the State to be the servant of the citizen, the means of the Common Being and Well-being, of Safety and Amenity. The State is there to be useful. It is not an end in itself. He absolutely denies the claims of any Group, Class, Nation, Race, State, or Corporation to possess the sort of mystical personality which decrees the individual to be a mere particle of that whole, owing complete obedience to its ruler, discovering his true good in subjection to the Group-Leader and the Group-Myth and having no life or loyalty outside the Party or the State. He believes that the relations of the various groupings, of nation and nation, of Churches and of secular corporations inside the civil State, can be settled by reason on a basis of mutual toleration. This settlement

CONCERNING PURPOSE

must be clearly defined in law and carry the sanctions of an agreed discipline behind it. He believes, above all, that a good life involves freedom of choice and that it is the business of the politician to see that economic bondage does not invalidate political liberties. He is well aware that the provision of such a life for all is extremely difficult to obtain in a world where passionate, selfish, and foolish people are far more common than rational, altruistic, and reflective citizens. But he does not despair, because he knows that if we abandon the One to the Many, reason to passion, choice to dictation and lose faith in the self-development of the individual, with freedom of thought, speech, and movement as the essential conditions of that growth, we have lost all that is worth having in life. Unless we are prepared to lift up our heads and enthrone the reason of each over the emotions of all, we have little enough cause to lift up our hearts.

It is frequently stated as an explanation, sometimes as a defence, of the dictatorships and their success that they bestow on people an

LIFE WITHIN REASON

inspiring sense of Purpose. The idea is that men and women living in democracies, having in many cases lost the engine-power or anchor which religion can afford, are drifting dismally without a clear notion of their destination or the proper conduct of the voyage. As Mr. Aldous Huxley has said of the millions in his extraordinarily interesting book on sociology, *Ends and Means* :

“They move through a life hollow with pointlessness, trying to fill the void within them by external stimuli—newspaper reading, day-dreaming at the films, radio music and chatter, the playing and above all the watching of games, ‘good times’ of every sort. Meanwhile any doctrine that offers to restore point and purpose to life is eagerly welcomed. Hence the enormous success of the nationalistic and communistic idolatries, which deny any meaning to the universe as a whole, but insist on the importance and significance of certain arbitrarily selected parts of the whole—the deified nation, the divine class.”

That is the view of an austere mind, which apparently has no time or sympathy for common

CONCERNING PURPOSE

pleasures. Mr. Huxley is one of those people who would enjoy psycho-analysing and sociologically "placing" a game of darts in a bar-parlour, but would discover no pleasure at all if he were asked to join a game and a glass himself. To him the ordinary joys are as specimens on the table of a scientist. He would investigate a football-match as a biologist studies the entrails of a worm. This claim that life without a strenuously and externally imposed discipline, life without an idolatry, is a vacuum and a bore evidently has much validity with certain people. More enslave themselves than are enslaved. But it is a view which democrats must strongly challenge. If freedom and the responsibilities, neither many nor irksome, which membership of a free community involves, are really so unpalatable, then we may as well abandon hope of civilisation altogether. But the motives which have so well served the tyrannies are surely far more complicated. The economic breakdown of the previous régime, with dreadful poverty and colossal unemployment, have done quite as much as mere lazy-mindedness to make people shout for a Red Commissar or a Leader

LIFE WITHIN REASON

of the Whites. Those who rallied to the Dictators were not all disillusioned democrats looking for a Purpose. They were hungry and desperate men, looking for jobs and food and not objecting to chains provided that they and their families were fed as well as fettered.

In 1918 democracy was a word on the lips of all men. It was the symbol of peace and hope and progress. But you cannot have such a colossal upheaval as that of the 1914-1918 world-war, followed by a revengeful and ill-considered Peace, without leaving the most urgent and the most complex of social and economic problems. To the new healer, Democracy, there was not passed a patient with a single and clearly diagnosed malady. Poor Democracy was confronted with a Europe which was an entire hospital and complete Bedlam, a colony of cripples and a psycho-physical mess on the grandest scale conceivable, and told to produce an immediate cure. Of course it largely failed. It was given small time and small chance. Dictatorship has failed no less. Has the mess been cleared up? Has madness diminished, hate been healed, frenzy calmed to toleration?

CONCERNING PURPOSE

The truth surely is that Democracy is neither a magic pass-word nor a panacea. In many places it has worked extremely well, in material affairs as well as in keeping alive the spirit of man. But it is not a convinced or efficient self-advertiser. The Dictators have the advantage of it there : they sell their Power to Save as assiduously as any vendor of quack medicines. A helot press and a powerful broadcasting service, together with the shameless abuse of the educational machine, are employed to glorify every deed of the dictatorships. Do they rehouse their workers, build a mighty bridge, dam some vast river, lay out magnificent roads ? Then the entire world must ring with the greatness of the organising powers in Moscow, Rome, and Berlin. Does democracy achieve a similar job ? Then a little polite whispering is heard. If one of the dictatorships had done anything so notable as the great work of co-operative agricultural development and the colossal feats of sea-bridging accomplished by the small Danish democracy, not to mention New York's recent magnificent developments in linking Manhattan to the mainland with the

LIFE WITHIN REASON

great new roads and the Washington and Triborough Bridges, we should have heard far more about them. In putting through great public works democracy has to pay more, because it does not use conscript labour and has a higher standard of living altogether. It further has the continual difficulty, unknown to Dictators, of getting popular sanction for huge expenditure. But, when it gets the chance, its brains and energy and invention are not inferior. Where it usually fails is in lung-power. That organ has never been weak or neglected in tyrants who know their business. The people who are always roaring about action realise that the roaring is at least half the business.

Contempt for "a good time" comes mainly from those who have an occupation which interests as well as rewards them. Mr. Huxley has no need to worry about release and escape and recreation. He is not minding a machine for 48 hours a week for 48 shillings a week. He has books and leisure and a room to himself, a room with a view. His mind to him a kingdom is, and there he can most freely, enjoyably, and profitably wander. But the ordinary man

CONCERNING PURPOSE

has not the successful author's liberty of movement or diversity of mental action. He does a routine job with hand or brain or both and he does not indulge in self-pity, as do many intellectuals to whom life would seem to be offering far richer opportunities. But, at the end of the day and the week, he does seek to find relief in pastimes, playing and watching games, chattering, listening, and even sitting with a fishing-rod beside a muddy urban pond. These activities are only intermittently a challenge to the higher faculties ; that is admitted. What is denied is the pointlessness of a life which is not wholly made up of serious meditation or strenuous activity. There is nothing in the least unworthy about the muscular and emotional thrill which follows the correct hitting of a ball or in the pleasure gained by seeing extreme physical skill and fitness displayed by others. A philosophy of liberty, which omits also to be a philosophy of leisure, has a tremendous gap in its composition. We cannot all be scholars and saints : the average sensual man may distress Mr. Huxley, but there he is and he is the statesman's raw material. We must work with

LIFE WITHIN REASON

him instead of snubbing him. For him "spare time" is a most important matter and we shall not make superior sniffing noises if he likes his spare time to be also "a good time." The arrival of machine-production has, by shortening hours, made the problem of public recreation more urgent than ever. It is no use dismissing leisure-occupations as the trivial and contemptible pursuit of "a good time." "Good times" are as much part of the ordinary citizen's good life as suffering is a part of stoical saintliness.

The sense of Purpose, then, is as likely to, and certainly should, exist in a rational democracy quite as well as in the world of idolatries, hero-cults, deification, and emotional folly of that kind. No doubt the man who slavishly buries his head in some totalitarian lump derives a kind of excitement from the close proximity of so many other heads, all out of work in their function as brain-pans. He escapes from his ego, he is merged in a mass, whose goal is his goal, whose god his god. He need not worry. He need not choose. He will be told. It is easy, and apparently it is enjoyable, to cheer or

CONCERNING PURPOSE

hiss when ordered to adore or to abominate. But, if that sort of life, that dedication to spells and their binders, is to be described and extolled as Rich in Purpose, then application to the less colourful virtues of democracy, respect for law, kindness, patience, toleration, self-reliance, and the like, is indeed a noble exercise and worthy to be praised by serious students of politics.

Let us fight to the end this ridiculous romanticism which encourages children of all ages to see Purpose in a life of militancy and blustering and in the crude pursuit of Power without the slightest consideration of what good that Power can achieve. Is there a Purpose, denied to democracy, in a dictatorship's stimulation of fear, suspicion and hatred and in the surrender of the individual to the lusts and panics of the herd. There is far more principle, far more ballast of solid purpose, in the unswayed man, "who is not passion's slave" but is content to do his job, however dull and humble, earn and spend his money, seek amusement, give as good a time as may be to kith and kin and self, and live without eternal fear of spies and informers and of being mobilised at some finger-flick

LIFE WITHIN REASON

of a half-crazy dictator or commissar. Democracy, tried too hard in countries where an unreasonable peace imposed on starving millions made reasonable government well-nigh impossible, has become far too humble and has accepted the stigma of inferiority with appalling complacency. It is high time that the million-headed mob lifted up those million heads. It will never do that so long as the conviction remains that a workaday life with play-a-day compensations is morally inferior to that unquestioning service of most questionable ends which dictatorships demand from their subjects. The idea of a Splendid Subjection, of freedoms nobly abdicated by men who see a grander life in servility to the Race or State than in liberation of their hands and minds and judgments, is intolerable nonsense. Man's masochistic itch to be trampled on is turned by the dictators and their spokesmen into a form of philosophy. It is not a philosophy at all, but an exploitation of human frailty. If there is no Purpose inherent in being a citizen of a free country, then there is no Purpose in anything and chaos has come again.

CHAPTER II

THEN AND NOW

THIRTY years ago in this country and, in varying degrees, all over the world the young man or woman of liberal instincts and progressive ideas had every reason to be hopeful. The young woman had no vote ; but that limitation, it was plain, would not last for ever, or even very long. The "advanced" people seemed to be in a position unusual to their kind. They were actually advancing ; theirs was the winning side. There was in the British Parliament a huge Liberal majority, a majority which survived two subsequent challenges and was only defeated by war and the emotional squalor of victory. That, perhaps, was inevitable. Reason shares with Truth, its child, the honourable but unhappy position of first casualty in any war. When people go mad, Liberalism is unlikely to be popular. The

LIFE WITHIN REASON

creed of reason will never come out top in Bedlam's polling-booth.

Before and during the war Labour was advancing on the Left. The pioneer work of Keir Hardie and his colleagues was at last bringing about results, and the breach between Radicalism and Trade Unionism widened. But there was no reason to suppose then that the new Labour Party would, from partisan motives and with what seems to be a cynical disregard for the advantage of the workers, not only reject all co-operation on the Left but actually make Liberalism the special target of its derision and its assaults. By rejecting all schemes of Proportional Representation, Labour has not only flouted the first principles of democracy but so assisted the defeat of Liberalism as to put the Tories in power and complacently keep them there. Great Britain is not a conservative country ; the nation's temper seems to be, in general, progressive. But the electorate can be wheedled or terrified into accepting a Conservative Government under another name. It is, however, fairly obvious that even a camouflaged Conservatism could not withstand a Left

THEN AND NOW

Front assault in which the combined efforts, resources, brain-power, and strategy of Liberal and Labour were carefully planned. That, apparently, is not to be. It does not suit the vanity of Labour Leaders or the complacency of the stodgier Trade Union officials. One can sympathise with the nervousness of some. Partnership with people more intelligent than yourself is apt to be embarrassing.

But we must return to the past. In general the prospects of rational, progressive development seemed just before 1914 to be genuinely good : it may not have been bliss to be alive in such a dawn, but the social view from a school-room or a University window was at least a good deal better than it is to-day. Democratic principles were finding general acceptance. Political liberty was taken for granted. In 1913 Professor J. B. Bury wrote *A History of Freedom of Thought* in which he announced that : "The struggle of reason against authority has ended in what appears now to be a decisive and permanent victory for liberty. In the most civilised and progressive countries freedom of discussion is recognised as a

LIFE WITHIN REASON

fundamental principle." A quarter of a century later, what have we to show ?

In country after country, once deemed to be civilised, freedom is publicly denounced and violently destroyed. Independence of any kind goes to the rods and axes or languishes behind barbed wire. Communism is no less intolerant than Fascism, and to differ one iota from Marxian authority about the way to create heaven on earth is immediately to suffer the pains of hell. The chief export of several great powers is a steady stream of refugees and it has become a common rule of statecraft to measure a citizen's value not by the power of his brain but by the shape of his nose.

To illustrate the appalling difference between world-opinion before the Great War and world-opinion to-day let us bear in mind one significant example. On October 13th, 1909, a secularist educator in Spain called Francisco Ferrer was executed after a court martial at which he was found guilty of stirring up the Barcelona riots of that time. Ferrer was a studious idealist and almost certainly a peaceful one, but his secularism was naturally hateful

THEN AND NOW

to the Catholics, and his politics of a philosophically anarchistic kind would certainly not please a board of army colonels. He stood a poor chance before a Court Martial in Holy Spain, where the odious partnership of clerical and military reaction had inherited the temper of the Inquisition. The case was very carefully investigated later on by William Archer, the well-known English Radical, dramatic critic, translator of Ibsen, and friend and colleague of Bernard Shaw, a man generally agreed to be so scrupulous of judgment and of intellect that he was more likely to over-value hostile evidence than to under-rate it. His conclusion, that the execution of Ferrer was a judicial murder, was therefore as near as might be decisive with all intelligent outsiders. What is tragically amazing to-day is that the Ferrer case did then become a matter of international indignation and of strenuous argument far and wide. Opinion in the United States was as much outraged by the scandal as it was in Great Britain.

Now can we imagine the judicial murder, anywhere from Moscow to Madrid, from Tokyo to New York, of a single secularist and

LIFE WITHIN REASON

philosophic anarchist causing even the slightest comment to-day ? In at least four of the great European nations and in several of the lesser ones anybody who thinks for himself and speaks his mind can take imprisonment and probably death for granted. "Ferrer Cases" are as common as motor-accidents and are as readily overlooked or set down among the trivial occurrences of the day. If we were to concern ourselves about a single case of religious or political persecution we should have not one minute in the day in which to mind our own business.

Such has been the collapse of moral, political, and intellectual standards in the quarter of a century since Bury so hopefully dismissed persecution as a lost cause and Archer was chartered by an American magazine to investigate Spain's blot on civilisation, namely the execution of one probably blameless agitator after some ugly rioting. Martyrs in those days had scarcity-value. They were Big News. Now the torture and shooting of political prisoners by the score or by the hundred is given a casual line. Murder as a fine art has

THEN AND NOW

been superseded by murder as a wholesale trade, and "to trample on the stinking corpse of liberty" has become the avowed and common exercise of the governing powers as much on the Left Wing as on the Right. Whether we turn our attention south to Spain or east to Russia and Japan, butchery is common form, persecution the indispensable companion of power, and any form of independence the safest guarantee of translation to a cell or a sepulchre or both.

In Great Britain we have not yet been reduced to this abomination. In matters of ethics we are certainly possessed of an increased liberty (some would call it license) which would have seemed very strange to many people twenty-five years ago. Neither Fascism nor Communism has so far made a wide appeal in this country, despite very strenuous propaganda on behalf of both. Both causes have made powerful bids for public support, but both have been damaged in Britain by the excesses of their European practitioners. The grim mystery of the Moscow Trials and the "liquidation" of the old Bolshevik leaders dealt as severe a blow to British Communism as the

LIFE WITHIN REASON

reign of terror in Germany dealt to British Fascism. At the time of writing the denunciation of democracy as a failure and a farce has fallen off from sheer lack of matter. Democracy is getting on with its job at least as well as any other form of government and is financially as well as morally far sounder than the dictatorships.

It is noticeable that the bitterest critics of democratic institutions are only too glad to live among them. Mr. Bernard Shaw, in his latter years, has delighted to make fun of democracy and to cry up the Dictators : but he always took good care to remain a British citizen and a British resident, although he would have been welcomed as a settler in Moscow or might have returned to his old home in Dublin where there is no libertarian nonsense about freedom of opinion or the right to read. Mr. Shaw may praise dictatorship, but he has refused to live in a land where the combined autocracy of Church and State will forbid him to read what he himself has written !

None the less we have no reason to be too confident. Repelled by Jew-baiting and the

THEN AND NOW

crudities of European persecution, the English Tory is at present on his best behaviour and vowing himself to be a confirmed son of freedom. But it would be unwise to trust the gentleman too far. The record of his party is not reassuring and still to-day there are plenty of his kind who are really itching to get up and stop somebody doing something. Serious efforts, for example, were made by some Conservative members of Parliament to obtain a Home Office veto on the International Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers which met in London in September, 1938. It was organised by such well-known desperadoes as the members of the Rationalist Press Association, the South Place Ethical Society, the Ethical Union, and the National Secular Society. Everybody who is not a complete ignoramus is aware that for austere respectability you cannot beat a British Ethical Society. These groups descend from that grave Victorian rationalism beside whose deliberations a meeting of Presbyterian Elders might seem a trifle skittish. The President of Honour of the Congress was the President of the French Chamber of Deputies and

LIFE WITHIN REASON

ex-Premier of the French Republic, M. Edouard Herriot. The Committee of Honour included a galaxy of intellectual distinction, but it was apparently believed in certain Tory quarters that the more prim professors of the most august Universities would either break into a licentious pagan riot or endeavour to strangle the Royal Family with the entrails of slaughtered deans and canons. At any rate sundry Conservatives, with Catholic support,* pestered the Home Office to put a veto on the whole business ; fortunately Sir Samuel Hoare, who comes of a Quaker family and has some sense of toleration for views which he does not share, was not to be scared like a silly child by boggy-phrases such as "Anti-God" and refused to drive out M. Herriot and the many great academic figures who took part. However, the British enemies of liberty were not to be shaken off. Robbed of their veto on the Congress, they demanded the

* In the *Catholic Herald* of August, 1938, it was said that "Cardinal Hinsley, speaking at the S.V.P. Annual Meeting at Cardiff, disclosed the fact that he had had several interviews with the Home Secretary since last October in an endeavour to prevent the Anti-God Congress taking place in September."

THEN AND NOW

exclusion from this country, by Act of Parliament, of all alien non-believers. The British agnostic might just be endured. But the foreign infidel—never !

The menace of reaction has taken far milder forms in this country than elsewhere. But the encroachments of bureaucracy and the eagerness of the official to be above the Law have been strongly criticised by men not usually supposed to be subversive agitators.

The Lord Chief Justice happens to be one of those who believe that eternal vigilance is more than ever necessary to save our British liberty. In a case of national emergency we might very soon find all the safeguards of our freedom swept away, for the will to be rid of them has been dormant only in Conservative quarters and is not destroyed. We have a Free Press which makes a great noise about its freedom and its rights when one of its employees, dispatched probably against his will to spy and intrude on people "in the news," is pushed off the premises by the reasonably indignant victim of his curiosity. But some of the major rulers and proprietors do not in

LIFE WITHIN REASON

the least welcome that genuine and valuable freedom of the Press which consists of having many small and local papers representing numerous regional and separate points of view. Whenever some of our Champions of Liberty hear of such papers they are only too eager, if there is any smell of profit or of power emerging from the business, to buy them up and merge them (*i.e.* kill them) in their already existing organs of vast circulation, which can, of course, put forward only one point of view.

It is not my purpose in this book to waste more words on those modern rulers and their satellites of the totalitarian State whom all liberal-minded people believe to be brutes or the dupes of brutishness and, in either case, menaces to mankind. Nor need we solemnly argue against the ideas of government which insist upon the elimination of all ideas but one. There is some tacit and partial sympathy—especially among the stupider kind of industrialists—for what are vaguely called “men of action.” But very few people in Great Britain will, at present, defend in full the totalitarian systems of government as they exist in the

THEN AND NOW

current dictatorships. The complete subjection of the individual to the State is odious to even the least ardent lovers of freedom and the denial of personality, which this involves, is deemed to be an abominable heresy by most Christians. This new slavery to the Myths of Race and Creed, myths finding their symbols and figure-heads in the new Cæsarism and the virtual worship of an almost deified Dictator, must have been at some time examined, at least in outline, by every citizen who begins to give himself a political education. To analyse afresh the philosophy and regimen of the existing autocracies would be sheer waste of time. That the reader has no wish to belong to a servile state of this kind, sinking his own identity in a multitude of goose-looks and goose-steps, cheering hysterically on the command, and believing whatever authority deems fit to make its slave-journalists print, will naturally be taken for granted.

My purpose rather is to examine the present state of our society, both at home and abroad, ethical and social as well as political and economic, in order to discover why so many of

LIFE WITHIN REASON

our hopes have foundered. While the dictatorships have much to teach us about psychology, a gloomy lesson but most necessary to be learned, the democracies, with their own particular kinds of disillusion, have also to be scrutinised if we are to discover the causes of the general disappointment. Only so can we explore the way to avoid further set-backs to the development of a free, healthy, and vigorous society, subject to reason and ruled by the general will as far as that exists and can be made articulate by the democratic machinery of government.

I began by describing the natural optimism of the "advanced" young person of twenty-five or thirty years ago. Things did then seem to be moving and moving rightly. All that was needed, we thought, was more and better and more swiftly functioning democratic machinery and a better educated democracy. If people were really liberated from the bondage of ignorance and given the freedom and the opportunity to seek their own good through a process of democratic self-government, surely they would be able in the end to choose well and to implement their choice by seeing that their

THEN AND NOW

representatives did genuinely represent their point of view. It all seemed fairly easy : or at least not depressingly difficult. The temper then was intensely Utopian : Mr. Wells schemed a new earthly paradise every year or so. Undergraduates blithely abolished capitalism with a midnight palaver or a twopenny pamphlet. It is true that Graham Wallas suddenly and disconcertingly introduced a note of realism by his observations on *Human Nature in Politics* in which he reminded the hopeful Utopians that the bricks of their New Jerusalem must be the passions and other traits of common character. Begin with the man we are going to save, the ordinary voter, and what do we find ? Blindness, fatigue, laziness, and average sensual weakness quite as much as the high civic dreams, comradely aspirations, and unselfish energies on which the Utopian hopes were grounded. The average optimist of the time was disastrously exaggerating the rational faculty of the average citizen. The democratic theorist was judging others by his own tastes and faculties. The sordid traffic in promises and abuse, slogans and clap-trap and

LIFE WITHIN REASON

downright lying, of any political election ought to have made it plain how over-confident we were in our estimate of the human material. But still we believed that education, plus self-government, would work the necessary miracle or that what was arranged by industrious committees of voluntary reformers, Fabians, Land-Taxers, Christian Socialists, Guild Socialists, and worthy zealots of all kinds, could be swiftly and easily translated into social realities in a nation of forty or fifty under-educated millions. We knew little of those millions. Far too little did we realise that their main and often desperate concern was to pick up some sort of a living for themselves and a large slum-bound, under-fed family amid the accidents of a complicated and often incomprehensible economic system. The civic virtues, which come so pat in the lecture-room and discussion circle, do not spring so bountifully in Mean Street.

The end of the war was a further stimulus to easy optimism. There had been so many pledges. There had been such generous hopes. The air, in Hamlet's phrase, was "promise-crammed." In the cupboards of the Ministry

THEN AND NOW

of Reconstruction (who remembers now that short-lived workshop of the Whitehall planners reinforced by ardent spirits invalided from the battle-fields ?) were innumerable schemes for rebuilding the social fabric. Airy treatises, guide-books to the New Jerusalem, poured out of the publishers' offices. Every kind of "ism" was advocated with happy confidence. John Bull for a brief period was Johnny Head-in-Air. And rightly so. For we do well to lift our heads—so long as we use them too. Somebody once remarked to John Morley, "All good things come from the heart." "Possibly," said he, "but they must go round by the head." I can think of no aphorism which better summarises the truth about human conduct.

But soon the vision faded. The fictitious prosperity of Inflation was over. First the workers were told to produce more goods for less money in order to regain or to expand markets. But the old markets were no longer open, the new were undiscoverable. There was over-production followed by cruel unemployment. The epoch of strikes, lock-outs, and almost incessant industrial conflict followed.

LIFE WITHIN REASON

The air turned sour. So we muddled on through those unrewarding 'twenties. Abroad French policy, with a certain amount of encouragement from the pro-French partisans in the Foreign Office and in Fleet Street, proceeded to snub and even invade the new and democratic German Republic, occupied its territory with negro troops, treated the entire German nation as pariahs, destroyed the chances of a liberal and progressive Germany, and made Hitler inevitable. Great Britain emerged from the creditably peaceful but pathetically idiotic General Strike. Labour had two turns of office without complete power and was overthrown by a swindle in one case and an economic accident, plus distrust and schism in the party, in the other. It could not achieve much by the nature of things : it might have learned more than it did.

So down to the 'thirties we moved, there to reap the dreadful crop sown at Versailles. What we should have conceded with grace to a free, friendly and democratic Germany we began yielding, in fear, to the Imperious Dictator and his show of might. A worse

THEN AND NOW

policy than surrendering to force what you have denied to reason is surely unimaginable. But that was our policy in the barren years of obeisance to lawlessness, and of the hustled, muddled rearmament, which was now necessary on so gigantic a scale that the money necessary for social reform seemed to be pledged for ever to the makers of guns and aeroplanes. It was small wonder that hope grew faint and that the outlook for the young progressive was as black in 1938 as it had been bright in 1913 when Professor Bury proclaimed the triumph of a liberal civilisation and the future inviolability of free thought.

Yet, if we can avoid a major war with modern weapons, which presumably will mark the end of European Society, there are many social changes which progressive people can welcome and a few forms of liberation which have been overlooked. We have erred by putting too much faith in the rational voter and the democratic machine : but there are other forms of machinery, some of which are beneficent, notably those which assist an improved standard of living, provide increased popular leisure, and

LIFE WITHIN REASON

make possible the wide range, cheap price, and greater comforts of popular travel. Many inventions, furthermore, have been social levellers and have done more than the gift of votes to make Jack as good as his master and Jill as good as her mistress. There have been enormous changes in the social customs, ways of living, sexual ethics, and moral judgments of men and women of all classes.

That side of liberation is not necessarily approved by all Liberals, especially by those who are the heirs of a Puritan tradition. They do not discover, in all the conduct of our time, exactly that form of freedom which seemed so desirable to John Milton. But nearly all progressives must welcome the defeat and removal of bans and taboos on works of art and literature, works which nowadays appear salutary or at least totally harmless. Victorian timidity in these matters seems now almost unbelievable. Edwardian England was really not much braver. The theatrical censorship at the beginning of the century was absurdly muddle-headed and oppressive and forbade the performance of such plays for Puritans, such

THEN AND NOW

sincere and serious and intensely ethical works, as Mr. Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and Mr. Granville Barker's *Waste*. Mr. H. G. Wells was deemed shocking by the library-managers and there was still much nodding of heads over George Moore. It is said that Smith's Library only consented to purchase and distribute Moore's *Esther Waters* after getting the "all clear" (or "all clean") from Mr. Gladstone himself! Except in the so-called Free State of Ireland this species of interference with the rights of authors and readers and playgoers has been largely abandoned: less completely in the theatre than elsewhere, but there too the progress towards enlightenment and tolerance has been considerable. Equality of opportunity has advanced rapidly in the sphere of education. The prospect of a poor student like Hardy's Jude being turned from the doors of Bibliol College is now most unlikely. The scholarship boy and girl can go ahead and the trouble now is not to keep them out of the Bibliols but to find them occupation, worthy of a scholar, when they have completed an education which has been as full as it has been free.

LIFE WITHIN REASON

So, while the international sky looks uncommonly dark and we face the melancholy fact that entire nations have turned their backs on what we hold to be the essential canons of a civilised existence, contemptuously abandoning freedom, toleration, and the use of reason as the proper solvent of political problems, there are domestic reasons for not being too doleful. I intend neither a diatribe nor a cry of despair. Let us waste no time or words on what is obviously abominable in current political behaviour in Europe or elsewhere. It becomes impossible to argue "when blood is their argument." Those who put Jewish professors in garbage-carts and drive them round the town are unlikely to learn from reason. The only hope is for them to re-discover in time a sense of shame and the promptings of humanity. Meanwhile it remains for us to analyse the blunders of past thought and practice and to assess the enormous possibilities of good which man's new mastery over the elements could open up, if only he were master of himself.

CHAPTER III

DAWNS AND DARKNESS

EMERSON once counselled his readers to look at the years in the light of the centuries : it is good advice if we are to avoid the common alternations of ecstatic hope and paralysing disenchantment. It is only twenty years since tortured Europe appeared to be hanging on the words of a now almost forgotten American President, whose offering to the world was no other than the familiar phrases and formulæ of the democratic creed. Autonomy of units in an ordered world, freedom of the citizen inside the free community, self-determination—that was the verbal coinage of the time. Very soon it was discovered that the glitter of these noble-seeming tokens guaranteed no abiding values. To put it crudely, they were cashed in for little enough. If you wish for evidence you have only to look around. It is perhaps

LIFE WITHIN REASON

well for Woodrow Wilson's peace of soul that he did not live to see the Europe of the nineteen-thirties.

If we are to keep confidence in liberal counsels and not despair altogether of rational self-government, we must not be too much appalled by the depth of the darkness which has followed the radiant dawns and confident mornings of mankind. The democrat, like every one else, perhaps even more than every one else, must keep his sense of proportion. There have been several such occasions when it seemed untrue that night must fall again upon the spirit of man. To English Radicalism at the end of the eighteenth century no metaphor of the rising sun was strong enough to express the glorious expectations of the new-born day. The sanguine spirits of that epoch really believed that man had sloughed away the Old Adam and was become the worthy tenant of a New Jerusalem on a lease that was to last for all time. France had spoken and all would listen. France had struck and all the sons of liberty and light would rally to her arm. What was the prospect which offered itself to the view ?

DAWNS AND DARKNESS

"France standing on the top of golden hours
And human nature being born again."

But human nature does not undergo these swift renaissances. Within a generation "France got her Bourbons back, Italy her Bomba, England Peterloo." The hour was leaden, human nature was the stuff of common clay, and the reaction was swift, powerful, and relentless.

For France read Greece and you have the faith of the citizen away back in the fifth century before Christ. In this Athens, still lovely as ever to the eye but subject now—most horrid paradox—to the grinding tyranny of a dictatorship, the idea of civic self-government and of equal rights for freely reasoning men was born and nurtured. Those early Greeks seemed to worship the new ideas and ideals as a young man adores the woman of his first devotion. "Equality, the very name of it is beautiful !" cried one of their orators. There was in this liberal Athens, which had risen to express and to celebrate the independence won from the Persian tyrant and his barbarian hordes by victories at Salamis and Marathon, a

LIFE WITHIN REASON

curiously passionate patriotism, a romantic dedication to the cause of reason. As Professor Gilbert Murray has put it :

“In the best men the love for their personified city was inextricably united with a devotion to all the aims that they felt to be highest—Freedom, Law, Reason, and what the Greeks called ‘the beautiful.’ Theirs was a peerless city, and they made for her those overweening claims that a man only makes for his ideal or for one he loves. Pericles used that word : he called himself her ‘lover’—the word is keener and fresher in Greek than in English—and gathered about him a band of similar spirits, united lovers of an immortal mistress. This was why they adorned her so fondly. Other Greek States had made great buildings for the gods. The Athenians of this age were the first to lavish such immense effort on buildings like the Propylæa, the Docks, the Odeon, sacred only to Athens.”

The Acropolis, or rocky citadel of Athens, remains one of the wonders of the world. Most of such wonders are disappointing when met. Just as the first democrats hoped too much

DAWNS AND DARKNESS

of man's capacity for freedom, so one often has excessive expectations of some much-praised scene or building. But the ruin of the Parthenon, the chief temple of Athena, goddess of the city-state and embodiment of the civic vision, is still greater even than the most sanguine fancy could suggest. It reveals, incidentally, the fact that beauty of handicraft follows beauty of conception. The earliest Greek art and architecture, that of Mycenae with its vast beehive tombs and subterranean pyramids, belongs to the worship of great stones and pursuit of mass-effect. It derives, through Crete, from Egypt. The new Athenian art put tranquil grace before the dominion of mass. The pyramid is the symbol of a servile state. With liberty comes lightness. The Parthenon is mighty, but it rides the rock with ease.

Wandering by myself not long ago in this noble place, which is happily large enough to permit such self-detachment, I found a broken fragment of some ancient building on which had been simply written in Greek, "Athens of the Athenians, the Free." Here, after two and a half millennia of brief dawns and long darkness,

LIFE WITHIN REASON

was I gazing at the graven testament of some liberal mind, some high, believing spirit to whom the new democracy in the city spread around meant a new light in the world, whereby all men could happily walk, if so they chose. There is plenty to be said against the ancient Athens. It was not a true democracy, but a rather wide aristocracy : yet this aristocracy had its own democratic machinery of free assembly, discussion, and the vote in order to settle its business. Then there were slaves to do the drudgery and build, ironically enough, these temples of freedom. Women had no place outside the home. The Athenian Empire was accused of being extortionate and tyrannical. It oppressed its colonies. We must admit the charges. But, with all admissions made, we must relate this city of light to the world of darkness in which it suddenly arose.

Athens did more than invent voting : it liberated the mind. It permitted and encouraged the cult of free reflection and speculation on all matters of the arts and sciences. It challenged the Oriental ideas of despotism. It broke indignantly from a way of living which gave all

DAWNS AND DARKNESS

power to the King and his satraps and none to the citizen. It set Reason against Tradition ; the Word, Logos, was to be as much as the sword.

In his epilogue to *Human History* the late Sir Grafton Elliot Smith wrote :

“When man began to devise civilisation, he became entangled in the shackles of the theory of the State, which he himself had forged. It remained for the Greeks to remove the shackles and to restore to human reason the freedom it had lost. Ever since then the history of the world has been a conflict between the rationalism of Hellas and the superstition of Egypt.”

This is a simplification, and the eager devotee of reason must not forget that, whatever the cool opinions of the philosophic few, the Athenian people remained easily stirred by appeals to passion and superstition. But the thing had happened. The glorious birth of the Free Spirit—and surely the “Naissance” is more than the Renaissance, of which we hear so much—occurred beside this citadel : here the arts and sciences, political theory and meta-

LIFE WITHIN REASON

physical philosophy, suddenly flowered as never before and as never since.

The glory was short. The flower was cut down. The lovers of the City of the Free saw it drawn, by the folly of imperialist demagogues, into a suicidal war with the militarist rival, Sparta. Disaster and disease ensued. Suffering created schism. The mob, infuriated by defeats, roared for victory and broke the careers of moderate men. Conspiracy bred violent reaction. Athens was reduced to the squalor of civil war and ruthless persecution. The judicial murder of the philosopher Socrates was a betrayal of all the city's original ideals, of "Athens of the Athenians, the Free." The story of that State is there for us to study. It is primarily a warning against Imperialism and War. It is a warning against the belief that human nature is likely to be born again, with durable results, in the interests of the progressive party. Meanwhile the marble index of those first free minds still stands on the Athenian hill, a rock-cut rebuke to all who have failed its message. Does the modern Dictator in his palace below never turn his eyes in shame from

DAWNS AND DARKNESS

that testament of beauty left by his ancestors, who once led the world in wisdom and in liberty ?

So the dream of democracy was broken. The Mediterranean nations went back to the old Egyptian model of kingdoms ruled by a conqueror and disposed of "like plates dropped from his pocket." What was left of Greek mental culture was penned up in Alexandria, "the hen-coop of the muses." Macedon fell upon Greece, not wholly barbarous but far behind the Athenian notions of a fair, free, city-state, where reason ruled. Alexander raided Asia with some ideas of spreading culture as well as conquest. But dying young, he left the Middle East to be the divided spoil of squabbling potentates. Rome rose and once again the notions of free speech, free choice, majority decision, were put into practice. But in Rome, as in Athens, it became apparent that democracy needs great qualities of self-restraint if it is to run an Empire without corruption or oppression. As the Roman historian observed, the corruption of the best is worst. The decay of democracy in Rome made way for the adven-

LIFE WITHIN REASON

turers, the gangster generals, and finally for the Cæsars who planted peace upon a conquered world and scarcely realised that it was a peace of intellectual death. Conquering Rome had borrowed some intellectual plumes from conquered Greece, but she never liked them or wore them as to the freedom-loving manner born. Human nature now became content with the servile security of life under Cæsarism from which the descent to the Dark Ages was natural enough.

The next challenge, that of Christianity, was to be ethical rather than intellectual. It offered new emotions to men starved of generous feelings, hope to the slave and the pauper, equality in heaven to those who could find none of it on earth. But it burked the political issue. The distinction between the two kingdoms of Cæsar and of God was fatal to the long-waning democratic impulse which had surged up in the world, amid the isles of Greece, four-and-a-half centuries before. Of course that famous text must not be isolated from the rest of Christ's teaching. But, if it is, as so often happens, removed from its context, it can be used to

DAWNS AND DARKNESS

justify a political surrender. The Christian may bow to Cæsar in the affairs of this world, with the reservation for himself of another mental and spiritual existence in privacy, a secret life of the soul's endurances and ecstasies. To assure men that the Kingdom of Heaven was within them was a promise which could be taken to set the virtues of the hermit above those of the citizen. Nearly all texts can be read in several ways, but the early history of Christianity shows that, after its first essays in primitive communism, it became a religion of escape and consolation for the unhappy victims of secular tyranny and persecution rather than a call to assert the equality of men before Cæsar as before God, and to demand the civic rights which are the logical consequence of a spiritual equality.

In any case that subject soon becomes too vast for further exploration. Our special concern is the belief that the ordinary man or woman has, or should have, the right and the capacity, through the faculty of reason and the opportunity for its use, to manage his own affairs. That belief in one aspect or another

LIFE WITHIN REASON

disappears for centuries at a time, which shows that it is not a principle of easy or universal application. But it does, in varying forms and with varying force, continually and powerfully re-emerge. It appears in the Protestant's claim to meet God face to face. The Europe of the Middle Ages had a dream of a unified society, one Kingdom of God and one Community of Man. Nationalism arose to break the social unity and Protestantism arose to challenge the authority of a single Church and its claim to a spiritual monopoly. Mr. Shaw has brilliantly linked the instinctive beginnings of the two revolts in his preface and play about "Saint Joan." Shaw's Joan is really a perfect Ibsenite born many centuries before her time. She was the individualist, the alone-standing woman, who believed that she had as much right as any priest to talk to God. Being in a minority she had to be the apostle of toleration.

Probably she had worked out nothing by a conscious train of thought. But she could see France standing once more on the top of golden hours if the soldiers would do as she advised and the worshippers would listen to such

DAWNS AND DARKNESS

Voices as God, without any Papal by-your-leave, might be sending to them. If her lesson, as Shaw thinks, told the world that the Churches must practise humility as well as teach it, then that message was fundamentally liberal. The rebellion against clerical authority, in which she raised one among many voices (but essentially a powerful one because of her romantic story), was really another re-appearance of the old belief in the wisdom of the natural man. You may call Joan's "Voices" what you like, products of Galtonic visualisation, a Quakerish "Inner Light," or even a dictate of the Non-conformist Conscience. The fact remains that she put her faith in simple people and believed that the ordinary Christian could fully know God and His Saints without a note of introduction from a priest. She believed in self-selection provided the people would later on select her too and endorse her claim to be the representative of France. That is a species of democracy. Democracy does not, if it is a true democracy, founded upon reason, burn the heretic but asks him to prove his case. As Mr. Shaw has put it, "There is nothing for

LIFE WITHIN REASON

us but to make it a point of honour to privilege heresy to the last bearable degree on the simple ground that all evolution in thought and conduct must first appear as heresy and misconduct. In short, though all society is founded on intolerance, all improvement is founded on tolerance."

So another dawn, that of freedom in worship, lit the sky. But it did not bring paradise to earth: the devilry of persecution began to infect the new faith as it had poisoned the old. After thrust and counter-thrust of rival creeds the Christian world settled down a little to enjoy its notably un-Christian eighteenth century. Hope not only rose and blossomed: it surged into the skies like the beanstalk in the fairy-tale. Wise men, with incredible innocence, suddenly proclaimed the Immediate Perfectibility of Man. How was this wonder of the New Adam to be created? No miracle at all, said they. He simply had to be told. Ignorance was his sin. Abolish ignorance and heaven would come to earth.

There was nothing really new in this preposterous intellectualising of the human

DAWNS AND DARKNESS

problem. The Greeks had done it all before. The error was as old as the Athenian Acropolis. Plato, with Socrates his mouthpiece, had defined virtue as a form of knowledge. It was assumed that, if you could teach people to know what was right, they would immediately do it. This simplicity of outlook suddenly reappeared at the end of the eighteenth century and was expressed not only in the radical philosophies of France but in the radical poetry of England. According to this theory the evils of mankind were not due to "nature" but to the tyrannical institutions and the load of ignorance which man had allowed priests and kings, corrupt teachers, and other self-interested frauds and bullies to place upon him. Once break through that ignorance, once get the victim to see the reformer's point, and then :

"This need not be ; ye might arise and will
That gold should lose its power and thrones their glory
That love which none may bind be free to fill
The world like light : and evil faith grown hoary
With crime, be quenched and die."

Shelley was under Godwin's influence and Godwin's book on *Political Justice* was really a thesis on the strange assertion that "Nature

LIFE WITHIN REASON

never makes a dunce." The philosophy of Helvetius, Godwin and their kind owed very little to that observation which we now call psychology : it laid down laws in the "high priori" way and very hopeful laws they were. Folly, they said, was a man-made article and what man had made man could destroy.

How ? By education. Characters, habits, and opinions were, according to this theory, creations of circumstance. Alter the circumstance, remove the barrier of ignorance, reveal to man his own good, and he would immediately and assuredly rise up and follow it. "Show me in the clearest and most unambiguous manner that a certain mode of proceeding is most reasonable in itself and I shall infallibly pursue that mode, so long as the views you suggested to me continue present to my mind." Well, the "I" may, but the others will not. There are such things as passions, fears, inhibitions, cravings, frailties of all kinds which are not abolished by a good Godwinian talking-to or by a noble stanza from the heart of sanguine Shelley.

Men are born free, said Rousseau, before

DAWNS AND DARKNESS

deploring their loss of liberty. Men are born equal, held Godwin, before deploring the errors of education and wrong-thinking which permitted tyranny to crush equality. "We hold these truths to be self-evident" said the authors of the American Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." Such dogma presupposed a glorious day to be breaking over the dark hills of the eighteenth century. It was a pity that it was so far from the truth, such a travesty of a realistic study of human nature. To say that men are born free is meaningless : to imply that they are born for freedom may be a salutary thought, but it does little to help us on the way. Men are obviously not born or created equal in capacity or similar in their likes and dislikes. What is even more important, the ideal of equality is not commonly popular. You can always incite people, when they feel themselves to be wronged, to applaud a cry for equality at a public meeting. But once give them any wealth, privilege, or authority and the

LIFE WITHIN REASON

craving for equality withers quickly. This is not cynicism. It is simple platitude. As G.K. Chesterton once wittily observed, the British democracy is not in the least concerned with the equality of man : it is far more excited by the inequality of horses.

Sweeping statements about the freedom and equality of man are rationalisations of a general desire. While freedom and equality are, in fact, obviously incompatible—a man's freedom is surely limited if he cannot eat more or earn more or spend more or talk more than his neighbour—we all of us vaguely feel that these are nice-sounding things. So "the free and equal" assertion is made by those who confuse statements with aspirations. There is a real danger here, as history has often proved. Those who make the sweeping statements inevitably see them disproved by the event. Whereupon the anti-liberal opposition can dismiss as rubbish the whole thing, the aspirations for equality and freedom as well as the assertion of their natural existence. That is disastrous. The aspirations are immensely valuable and they must not be lost because they have been

DAWNS AND DARKNESS

associated with foolish generalisations and flimsy perversions of the patent fact.

The next utterance of the liberal mind in Great Britain came from the Utilitarians who hated theoretical dogmatism of Shelley's and of Godwin's kind, and were completely antipathetic to notions of free and equal babies born with a necklace of Natural Rights conveniently appended to them. Bentham, the father of the creed, had no use for such "high priori" stuff. He claimed to be a realist and the result of his examination of the facts about life and society was the announcement that pleasure and pain are our masters. The end of existence, in his opinion, need not be a matter of profound argument. Human nature seeks pleasure and avoids pain. Therefore let us have as much pleasure and as little pain as possible, that is to say the Greatest Good of the Greatest Number. With so simple a psychological basis politics ought to be simple. Bentham assumed that men know their own happiness (he did not distinguish between happiness and pleasure) and will ensure it successfully provided that Government can prevent other men from getting

LIFE WITHIN REASON

in their way. Utilitarianism did not believe in Immediate Perfectibility or any drastic fancies of that kind. But it believed in a state of enlightened self-interest which would produce a contented and prosperous society, if all men sought their own pleasure while not impeding or diminishing the pleasure of others.

The Utilitarians were practical reformers and Victorian society owed a great deal to the clemency of their ideals and the improvements in public administration which they set in motion. Bentham was a grand old Radical and did much to abolish the appalling savagery of the legal system at the beginning of last century. But, while the actions of the Utilitarians as liberators were of profound importance, their basic philosophy was far too simple to yield an enduring creed. Once more we find the springs of human conduct reduced to a single motive. Pleasure is a vague word in any case and is not easily separable from the kind of action which produces it. But, even if we accept the term and believe that we fully understand what we mean by it, it soon becomes apparent that the motives of men are far more complex than the

DAWNS AND DARKNESS

almost childish psychology of Benthamism will admit. Man is not always considering his own pleasure : nor is it fair to say that, when he makes a martyr of himself, he does so merely to gratify his own desires. The thing is not as simple as that. The romantic and quixotic gestures, the cavalier qualities, the contempt for security, the reckless courage of devotees, the fury of the partisan, the almost masochistic frenzy with which men go marching off to wars which really concern them very little—are these really to be explained in terms of Bentham's Hedonistic Calculus ? That is to say, are men thinking always, or even often, in terms of their greatest pleasure ? "I no longer desire happiness," said Shaw's Marchbanks. "Life is nobler than that." He was not unique.

Nowadays too we are aware to what extent tradition and custom dictate conduct. When a person most imagines himself to be acting on an immediate and spontaneous volition he may really be reacting to some old association of ideas buried in his sub-conscious self or lying neglected in the confusion, the semi-consciousness, of memory. Up to a point,

LIFE WITHIN REASON

you may say, Freudian psychology supports Benthamism by laying emphasis on the strength of desire ; even when we are busy finding reasons for a certain line of conduct, it is the craving which creates the excuses. That is often true, but Freudian psychology, which must be taken in conjunction with Adler's insistence on the tremendous influence of the "inferiority complex" is, in its analysis of motive, vastly more subtle and various than the simple Hedonism of Bentham. The first Utilitarians had the usual innocent faith in their philosophy as a rapidly working salve for the sores of society. If only we began to think clearly and constantly about our own true interests and then pursued those interests, the confusions and distresses of blundering and brutish man would vanish. Bentham expressed a desire to re-visit the earth a century after his death in order to inspect the enormous progress made by the universal adoption of the Utilitarian creed. We can only hope, for the old man's peace of soul, that the facilities were not available.

It should now be plain why this chapter has been a series of backward glances. We

DAWNS AND DARKNESS

are living once more in a period of bitter disillusion. The world before the war seemed decently set for progress on democratic lines : the catastrophe of 1914 struck hard at these hopes, but it also generated fresh and lavish expectations of "a new world after the war." But so much has gone wrong, utterly wrong, from a progressive point of view. The "war to end war" was followed by a "peace to end peace." Armaments were never larger, animosities never more bitter. Democracy has by no means vanished from Europe, but it has disappeared over huge areas and centres of great power, in which liberty is publicly execrated. The tale of woe is too obvious to need any detailed narrative. The point is that we too in our time have passed from a dawn to a darkness : in Great Britain we have so far escaped the full impetus of reaction, but at least we have to ask ourselves whether, if liberty and democracy have been so fragile elsewhere, they are here as sturdily planted as we hope and believe.

It is useless to keep talking about the future unless we remember and reflect upon the errors

LIFE WITHIN REASON

of the past. Why is it that this continually resurgent belief in the fundamental goodness of man and the consequent simplicity of the problem of government is no less continually disappointed? First and foremost it is the habit, natural to intellectual persons, of over-intellectualising the entire question. The philosopher is always ready to make man in his own image. When you think of the average voter, how ridiculous do some of the theories about his function and his future seem!

What we have now to do is to combine a progressive outlook and a radical faith with a more realistic psychology than has so far been generally applied to political theory. The great mistake of those who wish to see a free and peaceful community ordered by reason has been to assume the presence, even the sovereignty, of reason in the entire electorate. The result of so sanguine an approach to politics only creates sad disenchantments: the mornings after the visions of "golden hours" may be as heavy and as grey as lead. The result of a more accurate and temperate political psychology will certainly not induce Utopian raptures;

DAWNS AND DARKNESS

neither should it involve us in despair. There have been great defeats. The causes of these defeats have been flaws of human character, or rather the inability of progressive thinkers and administrators to make allowances for such flaws and for the vagaries of human weakness. Those who blithely put their faith in a vague concept of beneficent Nature who made all men free and equal and "never made a dunce" were basing their political schemes on a fiction flimsy as a straw. We shall be happier and safer in our pursuit of a free society if we first get rid of such nonsensical over-confidence. We shall be far better servants of reason, if we begin by admitting and studying the aspects of unreason.

It has been proved a thousand times over that excessive reliance on human reason only leads to ruin of our hopes. Ignorance is not man's only sin or handicap. Sensible pursuit of his own advantage is not so easy as it sounds. What we have to do is to discover, mitigate, and render harmless the irrational impulses of man. When we talk of the political animal we should remember the second word as well as the first.

LIFE WITHIN REASON

The philosophers attended to the politics and forgot the animal passions. If we are to ask men to hold up their heads once more, we must be certain how far their heads determine their conduct and comprehend, where reason fails, what fear or passion is prevailing and how best to exorcise or sublimate that evil and find it a safe outlet. In a word, the Radical's study of politics is the diagnosis of distemper in a political animal. Laying down the law, with a high and mighty confidence, about free and equal and potentially god-like creatures does not even "get us nowhere" : it does nothing so harmless. The whole of human history goes to prove that it gets one into trouble, disaster, and despair. Over and over again political theory has erred by its lofty disdain of the material truth. That, above all, must we avoid. If "life within reason" be our goal, let us not be so much in love with reason as to forget the realities of life.

CHAPTER IV

ON THE KNEE

WHAT has most appalled and bitterly disheartened many of those who were confidently expecting the forward march of democracy in the twentieth century has been the widespread revival of Cæsarism and the worship, almost the deification, of the new leader. To the reasonable Briton, who had some faith in the advance of reason elsewhere, a Europe which has become one vast saluting-base, where the worshippers prostrate themselves before the Hero and only rise to scream hysterical applause at any further manifestation of his presence or his power, is an extremely depressing spectacle. The common willingness to venerate one human being with a kind of orgiastic frenzy seems sad enough ; when this ecstasy is transferred from the romantic figure of the Lord Protector to the national slogans, symbols,

LIFE WITHIN REASON

flags and myths the spectacle is even worse. The eagerness to accept a Dictator is something from which the Radical must not avert his eyes in pain. He must face the facts. He must admit, and he must try to explain, why the Germans, having tasted the assorted flavours of a republican democracy, rejected them so soon and so violently. No sooner had one monarch disappeared than a far stronger one was chosen : the old Kaiser was a mere court chamberlain compared with the new Cæsar. I say "chosen" deliberately. After all, Herr Hitler did not simply seize power : he was, after some early failures, overwhelmingly voted into it. You may say that there was the threat of force behind his appeals to the new Germany. True, but the new Germany could, and did, have its choice. Democracy was not slaughtered : it committed suicide.

When we remember that in Russia another form of Cæsarism replaced Czarism, that Italian zeal for the leader is a far stronger emotion than any loyalty which the constitutional monarchy and Parliament of United Italy could evoke, that Hungary, Greece,

ON THE KNEE

Portugal, Poland and most of Spain are at present ruled on dictatorial lines, though all have had a chance to savour the pleasures of democracy, it is fairly plain that the generalisation about man being born for freedom and the assumption that he is a natural lover of equality and fraternity are dangerous nonsense. The fact seems to be that there is in most men and women a powerful and constant craving to go down on hands and knees and grovel. We cannot assume that this only or chiefly occurs in countries where the customary habits and practices of religious observance have been in disfavour or actually suppressed. Where religion is most rejected veneration can yet be of the most abject kind. It is the Russian "godless" who release their inhibited desire for worship by filing past the mummified body of the God-King Lenin and swearing blind allegiance to his successor in that august omnipotence, Stalin. The Germans who have abandoned the Christian Church are doubtless the most ready to make obeisance to their leader. But in Italy, though Signor Mussolini has had his differences with the Vatican, the

LIFE WITHIN REASON

average Italian remains prostrate before both secular and spiritual powers at once. He or she has not abandoned the Madonna to serve the Duce.

Now our optimistic theorists of progress never made any allowance for this curious itch for self-abasement which is one of the strongest traits of human nature. With their too much rationalised, too much simplified psychology, they went on talking about the natural man who would seek his own good or pleasure whenever he was well enough educated to know it. But this natural man is not at all the reflective brain-worm of their fancy, a reasoning and choosing individual. He is an emotional creature who does not want the responsibility of deciding issues, and so gladly leaves the whole burden of government to the man who will take it over. He can be extremely happy on his knees with his brain out of action altogether. The young men whom we see photographed goose-stepping and saluting by the million are not ashamed of it and probably are rather enjoying it. If democratic theory does not take that lust for obeisance into account, so much the worse for its conclusions.

ON THE KNEE

It may be argued that the democracies can get along pretty well without this recourse to mass-prostration as a common form of satisfaction. But do they ? The British devotion to its monarchy and Royal Family has recently been strongly tested and proved to be exceptionally strong. When the Royal Family are "in the news" the concern of the average citizen is more than a personal feeling for exalted persons. It is both a loyalty to certain respected and admired individuals and a sign of support for certain traditions and ideas.

There is evidently some kind of powerful magic attaching to monarchy if people will stand all night in the rain outside a palace, tranquilly sandwiched in sodden discomfort between their neighbours and the iron railings, in order to get the briefest glimpse of a royal personage standing at a window or flashing past in a car. You may find such conduct foolish, even deplorable, holding that adults ought to know better, and that standing and gaping is no occupation for intelligent citizens. But there the fact is. No amount of good reasons and bad weather will deter them. For my

LIFE WITHIN REASON

part I think it far better that people should be thus spell-bound by a constitutional monarchy than prostrate before an unlimited dictatorship.

In autocratic communities the Dictator, embodying the National Legend or Hope or Myth, absorbs in his own person the flood of civic self-abasement. In democracies the prostration-impulse, where it emerges, is canalised into various and separate channels. The American people, whose need of objects of worship is greater than ours because they lack a Royal Family, are always eagerly looking for popular idols. Hence the hysterical devotion to Colonel Lindbergh after his great flight, hence the blissful obeisance before Kings of Sport, Emperresses of the Screen, and the "big noises" of the social "ballyhoo." Mr. Franklin Roosevelt has partly overcome the angry distrust of politicians and even of Presidents which was the legacy to the White House of Messrs. Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover. Furthermore he has proved, by his mastery of an all-persuasive microphone manner, how much the invention of a new means of easy and universal democratic approach must affect our notions of political

ON THE KNEE

theory. The skilful use of broadcasting on a national scale by prominent figures vastly enhances their popularity, stimulates those intense personal loyalties which make for abject prostration before the Hero, and so renders the achievement of absolute power considerably easier than it was before. This is not to accuse Mr. Roosevelt of absolutist ambitions. The point is that the new political technique, made possible by scientific inventions, further invalidates old dogmas about the nature of government.

Liberal philosophies have been far too neglectful of the ordinary human desire for shows and pomps and for hero-worship even to the extent of prostration. The appeal to lift up the head will certainly fail if we make no allowance for the heart. It was all very well for Bentham to work away with his notions of a Hedonistic Calculus or Pleasure-Standard, whereby the canny citizen was to measure his political values, form his line of conduct, and hopefully proceed to the Utilitarian heaven. What had Bentham to say to the chivalrous sentimentalists who regard calculation as the devil and prefer

LIFE WITHIN REASON

a coloured cockade to any amount of considered advantage ? The world is always full of such gallant chuckle-heads : the amount of people ready to suffer and die for idiotic reasons is appalling. There is a strong strain of the romantic and the play-boy in the most radical of crowds. Forbid the ceremonial flag and it is the proletarian who will soonest complain. To forget that is to court the kind of disappointment which always comes to the optimists who, strictly reasonable themselves, are looking confidently for strict rationality in others.

Young people educated in the history of ideas naturally lose proportion and regard ideas as far more powerful and pervasive than they really are. In their eagerness to abolish what they believe to be shams, and to establish what they believe to be realities, they develop a mental Puritanism. They are always looking for baubles to remove. There is a fine spirit, a zeal for a serious civic life behind that hatred of forms and ceremonies. But there is a great deal of folly in it too.

When I first began to think about politics I became, among other things, a Republican.

ON THE KNEE

(There was plenty of Radical authority for that.) I had no antipathy to Royal Families and persons. Indeed I considered that a Republican case could be well stated on humanitarian lines. Had we ordinary citizens the right to ask anyone to live such a boring life as that of Royalty, to be for ever doing formal things, wearing stiff, uncomfortable clothes, cumbrous, stuffy uniforms, and hardware hats, eternally listening to the same formal compliments, the same cheers, and the same tune ? In the name of mercy ought we not to end all this ? That was one argument. Another was the conviction that the shows of monarchy were too childish for a community of adults, that these processions in gold coaches, this display of jewels and gold lace and all the rest of it, were more proper to musical comedy and pantomime than to the political activities of a serious democracy. The money spent on bunting should go to feed and clothe the needy : let useless flags be turned to serviceable shirts, as swords should be turned to ploughshares. Moreover the Court was held to be a centre of snobbery, of backstairs intrigue, and of petty social corruption.

LIFE WITHIN REASON

The eager young Republican did not stop to reflect that even the drabdest of committee-rooms in the town hall of some radical Coketown may have their own back-stairs and that snobbery and dishonesty are not limited to the central areas of capital cities. When Gibbon defined corruption as the infallible sign of constitutional liberty he was carrying a taste for sardonic aphorism rather far. But his words should be remembered.

I imagine that such Republican views, honestly and generously held as they were by many young progressives who believed themselves to be considering the general good, have been very largely abandoned. During recent years the British have had a fair chance to be weary of royal ceremony: but the pomps continued to please the many and to be blind to the fact of that pleasure is mere folly. The sight of a crown is more liked than resented. It is true that democratic republics still manage to exist, on a large scale in the New World and on a small one in the Old. But the democracies of Europe are mainly limited monarchies, except in France, where the royalist cause has

ON THE KNEE

been so much associated with reactionary party politics as to make royalism wholly unacceptable even to the mildest of Liberals. On the whole the lesson of Europe has been a plain one. What has emerged in recent years has been the mob's craving to go from time to time on bended knee, to applaud, to adore, to venerate. There seems to be in human nature a belief in personal magic which is very difficult to eradicate. The idea of the Protector, Deliverer, the Storehouse and Exemplar of all the Nation's saving qualities, recurs again and again. You may say that it is a form of mental laziness, a shrinking from the responsibilities of the citizen who ought to think about protecting and delivering himself. But we are not now concerned with "oughts." Progressive theory has considered the "oughts" far too often and far too much. We are trying to relate the desirable to the actual and that involves a close study of all existing social phenomena, one of which is the general addiction to hero-worship. As was said, if there is no Political Symbolic Figure to worship, the crowd will grovel before athletes and film stars and fight for the most

LIFE WITHIN REASON

trivial relics, an autograph or even a cigarette-end of some vapid Venus or Adonis who happens to have a good film-face, which, incidentally, is by no means the same as a handsome one.

The case then for a Constitutional Monarchy, such as we possess in Great Britain and keep equipped with fairly expensive paraphernalia of palaces, life-guards, State coaches, and all the royal rest of it, is that the Crown affords a decent, a dignified and a safe target for the general popular habit of adoration, for the common belief in personal magic, and for the worship of what is now usually called glamour. If the people have no gracious kings and queens, no smiling princesses to wait for and to cheer, they may very well start to render homage not only to film stars and to athletes but to political adventurers and unsatisfactory cozeners and charmers and bullies of all kinds. If we intend to preserve and to improve our democracy we must bear in mind this human weakness for the bended knee and provide that the worshipping impulse does not have to find its outlet in salaams to a would-be dictator. The political Puritanism which would take away

ON THE KNEE

all baubles and cut short pageantry in the supposed interests of the poor has never for long appealed to poor people in this country. Therefore, in our quest to extend the sphere of reason in politics and of free choice and of toleration in affairs of State, we must remember where the danger lies. It lies in the self-abasement, the happy surrender of all personal dignity, rational conduct, and self-respect which is part of romantic hero-worship. The task, accordingly, is to canalise that very strong craving to render homage into satisfactory and secure directions. The Constitutional Monarchy, as we know it in England, is the most important of those. The root-and-branch Republican, who would sweep away the costly ceremonials and romantic finery of our monarchical parades and show-days, is taking a very big risk, a risk of which the events in Europe since the war should make us urgently aware.

So, though symbolic displays and "flag-wagging" are commonly associated with Toryism, we must put up with, even if we do not actively enjoy, a fair amount of these spectacular and emotional performances. They may be the

LIFE WITHIN REASON

lightning conductors which will save us from the destructive power of social storms. Liberal counsel has paid far too little attention to these matters in the past, but in a world of dictatorships and of mass-hysteria it can no longer afford to neglect the state of the brain above the upraised arm, the goose-step, and the bended knee and to find the safest means of "sublimating," as psychologists would say, these instincts and desires.

I would be the last to under-rate the gifts made by Protestantism, even in its extreme form of Puritanism, to the British civilisation. It stimulated the desire for political liberties : in many ways it freed the mind : it declared salutary war on monopolists in the knowledge of God and countered the excessive claims of authority in general. But, as a psychological basis for a progressive creed, it has always had its dangers because, in its noble seriousness of mind, it has attributed far too much of that same quality to myriads not possessing it. Public shows, the use of national symbols, salutes and cheers and pageantry, are never much approved by the more austere zealots of democracy. But what

ON THE KNEE

Francis Bacon called "petty wonderments" are, in the present state of public opinion, a state which is unlikely to alter rapidly, inevitable. They need not be detrimental to the proper working of self-government. Democracy seems to function quite as efficiently in monarchical Great Britain as it does in the republican United States, where the Puritan tradition and the unhappy history of the eighteenth century made any kind of monarchy impossible despite an obvious hunger in many people for something warmer, more personal, and more glamorous to cherish and to revere than the Declaration of Independence and the rather shadowy and abstract image of Columbia.

It might be argued that a policy of this kind aims at beating reaction by playing its own game and that those who allow the other man to choose the implements will always be defeated. This I take to be unfair. The object is to rescue Radicalism from that neglect of certain elements in human nature which has caused it to lose favour with the mass and to risk, if not to incur, defeat. We are not pandering to those elements : we are admitting their existence and

LIFE WITHIN REASON

seeing how best to direct or divert them, striving, that is, to accommodate a philosophy of reason and a creed of personal responsibility to the excitable, apprehensive, passionate, and volatile creature which man so often is. We surrender nothing which we believe to be essential when we seek means to prevent the devil from doing all the recruiting in the market-place.

In certain cases the progressive counsellor has very little to offer to a common human craving. There is, for example, the swarming impulse. It is a commonplace that following fashions is a highly popular human exercise, and there is no doubt that to stand alone is generally regarded as unpleasant. The dictatorships do gain an enormous advantage from the eagerness of so many people to bury themselves in a crowd and to do exactly what the crowd does, worshipping the same hero with the same gestures of obeisance and the same clamorous huzzahs, and slaving away in the same drill or drudgery for the glory of the totalitarian cause. Such conduct involves not the slightest strain upon any faculties save those of physical endurance. Also one must be able to tolerate the ugly

ON THE KNEE

spectacle of a large number of fools being foolish and to contemplate without nausea the antics of mankind when imitating the sheep, without its gentleness, and the ant, without its excuse of knowing no better.

Yes, we must cater for that common impulse of the One to be merged in the Many. It is easy to see how many people revolt against the menace of any solitude whatever. Poets and intellectuals may praise the glory of wandering lonely as a cloud and of being, mentally at least, the monarchs of all they survey. These can fairly claim that the scene is better for its emptiness, indeed would scarce be tolerable if swarms of trippers shared the view. Such people can also boast that their mind is a landscape in itself, since they have the requisite intellectual apparatus for enjoying solitude with the freedom of fancy and the indulgence of reflection. But the ordinary person, the average voter—though he rarely regards himself in that light—is not like that at all. He does not seek solitude : he evades, dislikes, resists it.

Watch him or her, discharged from the motor-

LIFE WITHIN REASON

coach, at the Beauty Spot appointed as a pleasing destination. Is there any wandering far afield? Very rarely. Watch them again at the sea-side. Do they seek the desolation of some lonely, lovely yellow sands? Not often. Far rather would the average man prefer to sit upon a densely packed beach where the sand is scarcely visible, owing to the press of humanity, its toys, and its mess. Twenty minutes' stroll would take him to an empty shore: but he has no appetite for that. He would rather queue up to enter a crowded bathing-pool of the artificial kind than bathe by himself in the actual sea without jostling or delay. The usual British citizen has far more desire to stay in a crowd than to leave it, however strange that state of mind may seem to the more sensitive and reflective type of person.

The extent to which this swarming impulse dominates national habit and psychology varies from place to place and time to time. There are Romantic Movements which occasionally seek to remind man of the glories of Nature and of the blessings of a solitary communion with that glory. These may touch the masses in so

ON THE KNEE

far as to make walking and cycling popular, but it is noticeable that walking and cycling in large troops and groups are more favoured than the making of lonely excursions. Some nations are more individualistic than others. The Germans obviously are more easily massed and herded than the French. But everywhere the liberal counsellor is up against this fact of popular behaviour, the general feeling that "the more we are together, the merrier (and safer) we shall be."

Since the whole philosophy of radicalism depends on the practice of personal choice based on the private use of reason, this itch to swarm is almost as big an obstacle to progress as the impulse towards prostration. I have tried to show how the latter impulse can be in some ways gratified without loss of dignity or freedom. I have suggested that a wise theory of reform will not renew the old too confident assumptions about human nature, but try to build on a more realistic observance of the way in which men like to live and to be ruled. Hamlet's cry "What a piece of work is man ! How noble in reason ! How infinite in faculty !

LIFE WITHIN REASON

... in apprehension how like a god!" may have the nobility of marble as a piece of prose but it is a very sandy foundation for a political philosophy. Man is not noble in reason nor god-like at all, since divinity certainly implies independence and the eagerness to stand alone.

How then can a Radical best counter this Swarming Impulse, which is bound to be a dangerous enemy of all advancement upon liberal lines? He will certainly support the devotion of the individual to all groups, unions, societies and corporations within the State which have worthy purposes. He will not severely frown on his fellow-citizens who care to spend their leisure as members of a multitude attending on some football game or other sporting encounter. There are worse things than athletic circuses: to wit, political ones. The British public have a better release for the Swarming Impulse when they cheer for Chelsea or Celtic, Arsenal or Hearts than they could obtain by gathering in their myriads to make a dictator's Roman Holiday.

We must, accordingly, show some sympathy for the swarmers. On the other hand there

ON THE KNEE

must be no surrender in essentials. Mental swarming is an abomination because it must soon destroy mind altogether : accordingly it must be denounced and exposed whenever the need occurs. Its opposite, freedom of thought and speech, the right to be socially queer, cranky, and different, must be defended always and with energy. The effort to veto a London conference of free-thinkers in 1938 shows that the need for vigilance is still as great as ever. The Nazi policy in Germany was to have public bonfires for the burning of all books which preached or even implied doctrine unacceptable to the ruling party. The burning of "junk" is not a bad idea. There are too many old books in the world : they clog our shelves to the exclusion of new ones and to the detriment of young authors. Very well then, let us clear out the dusty book-shelf : let us, like the Nazi, burn. But we shall perform this clearing and cleansing operation simply in order to leave space for more books and for more various, more challenging opinion. In developing a leisure policy for the community we shall prudently admit that people like to get together, to pursue the same pastime,

LIFE WITHIN REASON

worship the same athletic idols. But we shall always insist that this kind of solidarity, this flocking and swarming, must not extend to things of mind and to subjects proper for individual choice. Let the Communist write his plays and pamphlets which pay divine honours to the Noble Mass : let him pretend, if he likes, that there is a special kind of Mass Art and Mass Letters called Prolet-cult or something of that sort. We know that the creation of abstractions called the General Will or the Proletarian Voice is a menace to all those human values which make life endurable for men and women with liberal instincts. Unless there is room in our society for the Ibsenite ideal, the alone-standing man, the "odd man out," the plougher of lonely furrows, it is not a community but a house of correction and the air of prisons has ever been the nurse of a filthy ailment called gaol-fever. I suggest that a psycho-analyst, approaching the troubled spirit of the world to-day, would diagnose a mental gaol-fever as the commonest of all social maladies. It must be met with all the disinfecting power of common sense.

CHAPTER V

HATRED AND FEAR

INCREASINGLY during the twentieth century Europe has been a battle-ground of passion, and one does not need to read the stars or practise Merlin's art in order to feel convinced that so, for some time and in some measure, it is likely to remain. Despite our hair-breadth escape from general carnage at the end of September, 1938, we have no certainty of a safe to-morrow and no great expectation that "peace in our time" will indeed be the happy result of that dreadful autumn of tension and torment. If common sense can at last penetrate and overcome tribal fury, if men and women will cease to behave in the mass with a folly and a cruelty which they would never exhibit in their private life, if, if, if. . . . So it goes on. But the hopeful hypothesis serves our purpose not at all. The international scene

LIFE WITHIN REASON

is a wilderness of evil threatened with a damnation of terror which does not finally destroy but recurs and tortures, menaces and lives to strike again. Reason can find small audience and wisdom little livelihood amidst the roaring, withering gales of hate and fear.

Since no sort of life worthy of the name, much less a pleasant exercise of free faculties and liberal arts, can be enjoyed in this atmosphere, it is imperative that we investigate the cause of this disgraceful condition of the creature known as sapient man. Whence amid so much of intellectual and scientific progress comes this moral and emotional squalor which corrupts and may easily annihilate the past achievement and the future hopes of all civilised existence ? There are many who simplify the problem to a quite absurd extent. These are democrats who think it sufficient to denounce the abominable Fascist without pausing to inquire why people who were once reasonable democrats have swung over to the crude theories and even cruder temper and truculence of Fascism. There are Fascists who would resolve the world's problems with a single word, Bolshevism. There are

HATRED AND FEAR

Bolshevists who would explain it all by the poison of Capitalism and of the greedy violence with which the bourgeoisie seeks to retain its privilege and profits. But these efforts to explain the horrid phenomena of hatred and panic and persecution by parading words and phrases are useless. If a Communist tells you that there is no security under Capitalism, may we not fairly ask what sort of security of life and liberty, let alone of chattels, is enjoyed under the reign of Stalin ? The evil, obviously, is not private property alone, although abuse of private property may be a strong contributory cause of war. The bellicose passions may run high and produce the bloodiest results where no question of wealth or property exists. Divergent sects of Communists now, like the Christian sects aforetime, are quite capable of making blood their argument where nothing more is at stake than the interpretation of a text. Men will fight and kill and torture even more ferociously over a point of faith than over a loaf of bread or an acre of land.

We must in this inquiry go right back to the beginnings. Is this bellicosity of ours a form

LIFE WITHIN REASON

of original sin which civilisation attempts in vain to mitigate and root out altogether? That gloomy point of view received a good deal of rather shallow-minded support from the popular adherents of Darwinism when the theory of evolution was first becoming widely known. The idea of constant progress from the jungle led to a picturing of primitive human life which consisted entirely of rapine and warfare. That sad defender of authoritarian government, Thomas Hobbes, defined the natural life of man as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short," and proceeded to find a remedy for this foul and pitiful anarchy in total subjection to a powerful and protective sovereign. (There is a good deal in common between the political views of Hobbes, designed to bolster up Stuart tyranny, and those of a modern Fascist or Nazi.) Certain Evolutionists took much the same view of early man : the Garden of Eden, in their opinion, was merely hell on earth. Gradually, up from the slime came man, sloughing away, little by little, the baser qualities, proceeding on the age-long path which leads from bestial Caliban to learned, liberal Prospero. But

HATRED AND FEAR

it is all nonsense. Not only do all men's dreams of a pacific past, a golden age enjoyed in golden islands, at least suggest the falseness of this theory, but all the facts of anthropological survey attest the substance and veracity of that noble vision. The life was not, as Hobbes supposed, nasty and brutish. Poor it may have been, and sometimes short. But from stain of blood-guilt it was gloriously free.

Hatred and the passions which derive therefrom, or go to make it, fear, jealousy, suspicion, are not inevitable attributes of man. Easy generalisations about original sin and human nature red in tooth and claw have no proof behind them. The earliest men of whom we have direct knowledge, because their social types do still here and there remain in obscure corners, belonged to food-gathering societies. These nomads, without property, as all up-to-date anthropology reveals, do not nurture animosities or practise war. One individual may quarrel with another on occasion and flare up into some "angry parole" or even sudden violence, but sustained hatred, directed against whole classes and nations, is certainly not an

LIFE WITHIN REASON

early or a permanent aspect of human feeling and behaviour. Ignorance on this subject is lamentable : yet it occurs in people who ought to know a good deal better. They should certainly be well-enough informed to be contemptuous of crude libels on human nature based on those supposedly funny pictures of the cave-man administering club-law to his wife and weaker brethren. It is astonishing how this kind of unscientific nonsense survives even among educated people. Viscount Cecil has actually told the world that, "Coincident with the growth of political ideas came the elaboration of social and economic institutions and fighting became rarer. In purely barbarous tribes combat is endemic. The savage walks through the forest with his club or his tomahawk, as ready to slaughter his fellow-men as he is to kill other animals." Any competent sociologist, a W. J. Perry or an Elliot Smith, could, of course, dismiss this rubbishy theory with a fusillade of facts. The first thing is to distinguish between the true primitive and the savage corrupted by property and government. So long as man was a simple nomad, collecting food, he did not

HATRED AND FEAR

bother about weapons : he was a peaceful anarchist, a bushman or a forester, fleeing the time carelessly, as in the golden days. Here is a picture of the primitive, unpropertied Negrito, whom Lord Robert Cecil thinks of as a natural and abominable robber and murderer. Writes a Philippine missionary of the primitives in his zone :

“There is no question of warfare between the different Negrito groups ; they usually know one another ; and, even when unknown, they are always very friendly ; they seem to consider the whole Negrito race as a big family, any representatives of it being welcome to their homes at all times. . . . When I asked Masigun if they would allow even Negritos from farther away to hunt in their forests, he candidly answered me in the affirmative, and added: ‘We cannot forbid them ; if they like to come here and hunt on our forests they are allowed to do so ; why not ?’ When I asked him if his people would not object or shoot arrows at them, he simply laughed, seeming to find the idea a very funny one, and said, ‘No, never.’ Mr. Van Overbergh’s opinion of the Negrito

LIFE WITHIN REASON

may be summed up in his words : 'A Negrito is always happy, he laughs more than he weeps ; he is devoted to his friends (and he has no enemies), and is always ready to succour them ; he is very polite, and he is hospitable to a remarkable degree. . . . To the Negrito life seems to be a very joyous affair, and he does not seem to have any preoccupations at all. To him each day has its cares, and, if he cannot find to-day what he is in need of, he expects to find it at some other time, not seeming to care a fig for disappointment of any kind.' "

On the whole the Negritos' conduct seems to be a good deal superior to that of modern Europeans and their state the more felicitous. Carefully collected accounts of similar primitive peoples still or recently surviving in the aboriginal state, Esquimaux, Andamanese, and many others, all show that corruption comes with government and that innocence precedes it. Here the wise philosopher has anticipated sociological science. Tom Paine never spoke with a better combination of accuracy and eloquence than when he said :

"Society is produced by our wants and

HATRED AND FEAR

government by our wickedness ; the former promotes our happiness positively by uniting our affections ; the latter negatively by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions. The first is a patron, the last a punisher. Society in every state is a blessing ; but government, even in its best state, is a necessary evil. . . . Government, like dress, is the badge of our lost innocence ; the palaces of kings are built on the ruins of the bowers of paradise."

The universal belief in a golden age, the ubiquitous backward glances to a Saturnian reign of peace and plenty, and the general dream of a natural society without forceful government, are themselves a considerable indication of a *Paradise Lost*. But we need not base our faith in man's original virtue upon myths and legends. The scientific researches of anthropology into the conditions of primitive society, which is most certainly not the same as savage society, prove conclusively that man was not born and did not immediately become a marauder and murderer : he only declined to this after long passage of time. The cause of the

LIFE WITHIN REASON

Fall of Man accompanied the transition from food-gathering to food-growing, since this change increasingly involved him in the taking and owning of land and the hoarding and retailing of its fruits. So society grew in complexity; then came precedence, rank, and class, and with rank a division into owners and non-owners, rulers and ruled, kings and subjects. Organisation had come and with it authority. With authority came the emotion on which authority battens, fear, and with fear the emotion which may overthrow all order as well as all authority, hatred.

Because these emotions came with the institution of property and of the State, which organises and protects ownership as well as performing many other regulative functions, there is no logical reason for supposing that only the abolition of property demanded by the Communists and of the State with its regimentation and its implements of force, as demanded by the Anarchists, will rid us of the tyranny which hate and fear can exercise. It is not the fact of ownership but the quantity and the method of distribution which create "envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness." That is the liberal

HATRED AND FEAR

view and it is a view founded upon plain fact. Fear and hatred of a neighbour are not determined by the fact of his riches, but by the way in which his riches are translated into social power and that power then abused. That is why equality, although as a hard-and-fast concept it cannot be applied to society without loss of valuable freedom, must always be a general principle of radical policy. Total equality is impossible. But at least a full measure of equity can be desired and achieved. Equality would give to all the members of a family, from grandfather to infant in arms, a similar slice of cake, which is foolish and unhygienic. Equity suits the slice to the person and his gastric capacity. In a community where true equity flourishes there will not be mathematical equality : nor will there be hate and fear. Application of equity always causes difficulties, because the question arises, "Who shall decide the just portion of cake ?" or, in the international sphere, "Who shall decide just ownership of armaments and colonies ?" But the difficulties and the bickerings do not destroy the principle. We must have equity in

LIFE WITHIN REASON

the distribution of power and property if we are to avert those envies and animosities and apprehensions which bring society to misery and ruin by civil and international war.

The recent and valuable developments in the practice of psychology and in the scientific analysis of feelings and desires have laid great stress on the strength of sexual motives, conscious or otherwise. But I believe that, while the sex-impulse has been credited, at least by some authorities, with excessive and ubiquitous importance, the urgency attributed by Adler and his followers to the Inferiority Complex is in fact far more helpful, especially when we come to the consideration of man as a political animal. Men who have been born to and have become used to servile conditions, like animals born in captivity, may not feel the irksomeness of inequality, or, at least may not feel it until much propagandist activity has been brought to bear upon them. It may be that the slave, as happened to some extent in America, is the last to be aware of his chains. But once impose a sense of inferiority on people who have known power and status or endeavour to continue it

HATRED AND FEAR

in the case of awakening classes and races and you rouse hatred in its most violent and venomous forms, hatred so intense that it will include anybody who can possibly be imagined to have assisted the process of humiliation.

The case of Germany is the most obvious example. The prime object of the Allies in 1919, mad-drunk with victory, much influenced by France's delirious lust for revenge, and exposed to the powerful personality of that witty but essentially stupid and vain old man Clemenceau, was to humiliate Germany to the utmost. Wilsonian Liberalism, which had done quite as much as French fury to discredit and defeat the old Germany, was swept aside. The dictated peace, with its preposterous financial impositions, was a document of vengeance. Germany had to "own up" to exclusive guilt in starting the war, like a child writing out a hundred times, "I have been a naughty boy," although all informed people knew perfectly well that the problem of war-guilt was not as simple as all that. For the benefit of British, French, Italian and even Japanese Imperialism, Germany was stripped of

LIFE WITHIN REASON

its colonies (this after a War for Small Nations !) and was then treated as a pariah and forbidden membership of the new League of Nations. Germany was not considered worthy to argue a point. Its statesmen were not fit to sit at the same table in Geneva as the representatives of a gangster-ridden South American Republic. All it could do was sign the document and keep its fury for another day. These humiliations were accompanied by the continued starvation of the German people in defiance of pledges, by a Treaty which flagrantly broke most of the principles on which the Allies had proposed peace, and by the quartering of black troops in highly civilised German towns like Wiesbaden, where they marched about daily, beating their tom-toms, as representatives of Allied culture. Later came the supreme folly of the invasion of the Ruhr. The French, in their lunatic lust for vengeance, did everything they could to brand the Germans with a sense of inferiority.

No doubt there was natural cause for an invaded nation to wish to hurt the invader as much as possible. But the French are for

HATRED AND FEAR

some mysterious reason often credited with a sense of logic and called realists. They could not possibly have behaved with less reason and with more romantic folly than by first starving and then insulting and stigmatising as outcasts a defeated nation of far greater numbers and potential strength than themselves. To a Frenchman it may have been fun to kick Germany when it was down. But was it sense? MM. Clemenceau and Poincaré between them, by forcing the proud nation to grovel, made its angry resurgence inevitable. They were the true authors of *Mein Kampf*. Hitler was the natural child of French policy and of the British fools who played up to it. He and his drive for the restoration of German self-respect were bound to come. Anybody with a sense of history could see that. Scarcely anybody saw that he would come so soon and that his power would grow so fast or that the French, who had hugely delighted in kicking Germany when prostrate, would fall into such a helpless panic when the wounded and branded giant started to rise. First the Allies did everything possible to stimulate the spirit of revenge and then they

LIFE WITHIN REASON

let the naturally infuriated monster renew his strength unchecked.

The first object, accordingly, of any prudent policy in national or civic affairs, must be the removal of those inequalities or inequities which create the sense of inferiority. It is useless to aver that your enemies are morally inferior people and deserve to be so scheduled. Future safety is far more important to society than past deserts. The psychological results of "getting people down" are infinitely horrible. Not only is the temper embittered : the mind is debauched and reason overthrown. The ordinary person, for example, is always unwilling to believe that he has been beaten and overthrown fairly. It is the easiest thing for malevolence to suggest treachery and so kindle fury. In time of war a large number of any belligerent population soon begins to suffer acutely from spy-mania and becomes altogether crazy. The victims of this mental disease simply cannot believe that their own brave soldiers and brilliant generals have lost a battle by any fault of their own. There must have been foul play. Somebody betrayed a secret, somebody played

HATRED AND FEAR

false, somebody practised treason behind the lines. Somebody lit a match and signalled to a fleet of aeroplanes. Somebody secreted six-pennyworth of petrol in a lobster-pot and so enabled a whole fleet of enemy submarines to manœuvre at will. There is no limit to what people, subject to this frenzy, will believe. So a fever of suspicion leads to the squalor of spy-hunting, delation, and persecution, while, after a defeat, a whole class of people may be accused of perfidy and then brutally victimised. That is what happened to the German Jews and Socialists and other suspect species. It was assumed by the Nazis—and loudly proclaimed to the growing generation—that the German Army could never have been beaten in fair fight. The Invincible Aryan had been foully betrayed. The Jews and Marxians behind the lines had let the gallant soldiers down. Therefore let the Jews and Marxians suffer to the uttermost limit. So the Allies' effort to punish the Germans really resulted in punishing the Jews and the "Left" politicians, a punishment as savage as it was unjust. The psychological process is an elementary one to understand.

LIFE WITHIN REASON

The victor brands his defeated enemy with every kind of stain as well as rolling him in mud and blood. The enemy, dazed like a tormented bull in the arena and altogether bereft of reason, looks round for somebody in his own camp who cannot hit back, puts the entire blame on him, and starts to victimise the poor wretch with all the frenzied passion to which humiliation has reduced him. So war works.

This much, then, may be taken as established. Man is not an incurable victim of maniac hatred ; there is nothing in his origins to prove him a hopeless case. Indeed, the very reverse is true. Just as his first efforts in art, as represented by the marvellous animal drawings in the Altamira caves, surpass, in spirit and technique, the work of many subsequent centuries, so his first experiments in living were as successful at least in a negative way. The primitive man was free from hate and fear and so guiltless of war. The horrid and oppressive myths which drove him in panic to accept superstition and sovereignty as his supposed guardians were yet to come. We find the origins of war in the history of man organised, not in the spirit of man primitive.

HATRED AND FEAR

Next we discover that the fear, which begets hate, and the hate, which begets war, are not of all time or of all place. Tradition, following some accidental trend, has had much to do with the creation of embitterment. It is a commonplace that people who have no tradition of war can live alongside each other without recourse to arms and can settle differences as amicably as two suburban neighbours who have quarrelled about a protruding tree or a barking dog. If we can abolish the war-mind we may abolish war itself. The business of settlement by mass-murder, which seems perfectly natural in certain areas, seems no less unnatural in other more liberal-minded districts. The horrible thing is the number of nations who still take war as a normal exercise, hatred and fear as normal conditions, of supposedly civilised mankind.

It is a dreadful fact that people should take wars for granted. Yet they do. All education, all romantic story-telling and drama presuppose soldiering as a proper and noble and enduring occupation. The schoolboy, faced with his ordinary history book, takes

LIFE WITHIN REASON

all this killing, all this absurd readiness to be killed, for granted. It is always salutary to try to look at things afresh. Begin with the Bible. Read it as though it were an entirely new book. Then try history. Read that as if you had just heard of these happenings for the first time. The willingness, the eagerness even, of large hordes of men to mutilate and murder and to suffer mutilation and murder in their turn for the most trivial, remote and impersonal of reasons is terrifying. Shakespeare, who did not miss much and put so much of what he saw into Hamlet's mind, remarked upon an army of "mass and charge" ready to die "even for an egg-shell" and also upon :

"The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds ; fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain."

It is as true of Hitler's as of Hamlet's Europe. Some egg-shell of a place, a mere acre, may become the tomb of millions and the sepulchre of civilisation itself. One man or a group lusts to possess : there is no proof of real

HATRED AND FEAR

value in the desired object. The idea of possession is what acts as spur and motive. So will whole nations leap to the assault and the defence.

Yet this madness need not be. It is not universal. Some nations can sit side by side without coveting and growling and fearing and suspecting and generally behaving like sub-human misers, thieves, and cut-throats. The example of the Canadian and U.S.A. undefended frontier is familiar. Not long ago, during a Scandinavian holiday, I landed on a pleasant island called Hven (Veen in our pronunciation). It lies between Denmark and Sweden, looking towards Hamlet's Elsinore, a fertile little island with timbered farmsteads similar to those of our English scene. It has been a Danish property. It is now Swedish. Yet many Danes, whom I told of my agreeable trip to this island, had not the faintest idea to whom it belonged. Nor did they care. It was happy and prosperous. Why worry? Some thought it was Danish and smiled when I told them that I knew better. They had lost it. A national disgrace! They smiled again.

LIFE WITHIN REASON

Yet it was a desirable place. Elsewhere the problem of its ownership might easily have stirred desperate passions and started the abominations of war. But the Scandinavians have outgrown this egg-shell madness, as Hamlet might have called it. They are not going to cut each other's throats about a mile or two of cornland and meadow and some rocky shore. They are advancing beyond all the pettiness of the rival communities elsewhere. Why, you can cross over from Denmark to Sweden and back without showing a passport ! What an outrageous state of licence and anarchy that would be deemed in other parts of Europe, where the cult of frontiers and flags and barriers and exclusions is celebrated with as many miles of barbed wire as of red tape. Reasonable communities, like the Scandinavian, are not inflamed by acquisitive lust when they see a dubious acre and so avoid all that panic and suspicion of strangers which elsewhere makes travel intolerable. They let the passenger pass, unless he has first proved himself unworthy, and do not plague and pester him with irrelevant questions and restrictions.

HATRED AND FEAR

To ease the strains and even to extirpate altogether the sense of inferiority which begets such bitter hatred in and between communities ought not to be difficult. If we apply principles of equity to the problems of property and possession, the satisfaction of legitimate desires should bring about appeasement. Man is not an ingrained hater or fighter: his present condition in some happy portions of the globe, as well as his first experiments in conscious development of social life, afford us that most welcome assurance. All the commonly alleged causes of war have to be taken into account. None of them is irremediable if the mental approach be fresh and the practical cure applied contains within it the liberal principle of equity and the cooling balm of reason. But there are other qualities of mind and character essential to the therapy of a distempered world, qualities not always remembered in works of political theory. These we have now to consider.

CHAPTER VI

TO SEE OURSELVES

THE surest remedy for those resentments and jealousies which create fear and hatred and so are the raw material of contention at home and of warfare abroad is the establishment and administration of equity. This doctrine of the Fair Share is not every man's desire, reasonable as it may sound. One type of extremist demands inequality on the supposition that it is a law of nature, the normal condition of humanity. It is true that belief in a caste society is not often publicly proclaimed nowadays. Not many care to sing openly their belief in that caprice of divine ordinance which puts

"The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,"

but there are plenty of people, not all dwelling in castles, whose philosophy runs that way.

TO SEE OURSELVES

Their creed, though not always explicit, is strongly and passionately held. They believe that it really does "work for the best" if one man has a million acres and the other none. A good landlord, they hold, may be all the better citizen if he has an extra large helping of the nation's earth or wealth. It is an odd notion, but frequently met not only among the dependants and admirers of the Big House, but in quarters where it seems least likely to appear. After all, the ordinary urban workman in this country dislikes nobody so much as a benefactor. The millionaire to whom he pays ground-rent will endear himself far more to the crowd by keeping racehorses with his money than by handing it back to the people in the shape of hospitals, parks, and welfare centres. The donors of these latter are tolerated, while the owners of Derby candidates are adored.

The other extreme party would level everything by austere standards of equality, standards which human nature seems to dislike and to reject. Jealousy of a rich man's riches is strangely absent from our public life. The average man, considered as an individual, is

LIFE WITHIN REASON

not envious. The trouble about equality is that it can never be equated with liberty and most believe liberty to be the more precious of the two as well as the easier to obtain. The average member of the British proletariat does not grudge Lord Derby his estates—so long as he is free to back Lord Derby's horse in a Derby or a Leger.

Between these two opinions stands the liberal counsel, the demand for equity. The old Socialist slogan of "To each according to his needs, from each according to his capacity" is an interpretation of equity which Radicals need not reject. But, while it may suitably grace a peroration, it is far too vague to be of much use in the administrator's office except as one of those texts for a secular gospel which all persons in authority might hang above their beds—and do not. But there is one phase of equity which is really of consummate importance in every kind of political and economic action. To match needs with faculties and powers, to discover, as far as may be, the just price and the fair share, to compare the other man's chances and necessities with your own,

TO SEE OURSELVES

needs more than mathematical inquiry, accountancy, statistics, and the service of a Research Department. It needs imagination. It needs sympathy. These are two kindred forms of political wisdom for which the text-books of political theory have made far too little allowance. The familiar tag of Robert Burns about seeing ourselves as others see us should be written up quite as often and as prominently as any other sage text of admonition for statesmen. The Powers so rarely bestow on us this "giftie."

The number of exalted and influential people, for example, who pause to think how their remarks will be taken by the people on the other side is extremely small. Yet this faculty of sympathetic imagination is absolutely essential to the establishment of reasonable and pacific relations both in small and great societies. In our search for liberal means and principles of life, we must treat imagination of this kind as a political asset of the first order. The lack of it can so easily stimulate deep and lasting animosities. Along with that sense of humour, which we believe will notably assist the cause of peace, must be the sense of the other man's

LIFE WITHIN REASON

grievance which only a practical, humane, and widely sympathetic imagination can convey. There are in public life many enjoying high reputation as mediators and arbitrators and peace-makers of all kinds. They are most adroit and ingenious at "exploring avenues," "discovering formulæ," "reconciling opposing interests" and so forth. They are serviceable legalists who can find a compromise and on it base an acceptable composition. They are most useful to the State and, in larger matters, to the community of nations. But their kind of peace-making only follows strife ; it does not avert it. Lawyers, after all, live by settling quarrels : what a poor world it would be for them if none were ever in dispute ! But in great matters of internal economy and more especially of international politics our object must be to prevent brawls instead of settling them when they have already broken out. The latter course admits too many dangers. As a means of this prevention of trouble, which is so much better than cure, there is no gift so valuable as the power to imagine. It is a quality in which the liberal mind should be particularly strong and

TO SEE OURSELVES

on many past occasions it has been thus fertile—to the great benefit of myriads who little realised where the saving force lay.

The British people are certainly not well gifted with the power to see themselves and that is one reason why they make enemies without knowing it and without intending any harm or offence. The corrupting force of custom is potently at work and it is this which deadens imagination and creates a mental blindness to the other man's position. We may take the case, for example, of Empire. The British are so accustomed to owning enormous portions of the world, either through Dominion tenure or directly as Crown Colonies, that they utterly fail to understand the point of view of the unsatisfied Powers. A great proportion of those British citizens who protested against the Italian seizure of Abyssinia as a piece of pillage were quite incapable of understanding the Italian's hatred of what they deemed to be British humbug. Who is Britain, said the Italian, to complain about colonisation by seizure? Britain has been doing this sort of thing on a colossal scale for centuries : she would have taken Abyssinia

LIFE WITHIN REASON

long ago, as she forcibly occupied so many other million square miles of Africa, if she had thought it worth while : she has only stopped seizing territory because she has more than she knows how to use : by what sort of right does Britain, glutted with Empire, grumble and even roar against such a tiny imitation of British Imperialism as we are now attempting ? Of course such remarks obscure certain facts, such as that Abyssinia was a member of the League of Nations and that the technique of land-grabbing has altered altogether since the days of Clive : colonisation is not quite the simple game of snatch-and-stay that once it was. Still, if you had been a young Italian surveying the map of the world and the crowded poverty of your own land, would you not, rightly or wrongly, have resented the scolding tones of Mr. Eden, the lecturings of the British Press, and the application of sanctions as it were the punishment of a naughty boy caught stealing apples by an owner having far more fruit than he could himself consume ?

British imagination continually fails in this regard. For example, at one time during the

TO SEE OURSELVES

Spanish Civil War, Mr. Eden exclaimed that Great Britain stood absolutely for the integrity of Spanish territory. But Britain does nothing of the kind. It stands for keeping the British in Gibraltar, which is not only, by site and nature, Spanish territory but an extremely valuable corner of that land. Did Mr. Eden pause to think how any German or Italian would take a remark like that? The British idea of Spain for the Spaniards is getting the Germans and Italians out and keeping the British in—at least in one vital spot. The British citizen is expected to bristle with indignation when he reads of Italian airmen in Majorca and German technicians in Spain and to vow that they must be ejected. At the same time the Germans and Italians are to take it as part of the dispensation of Providence that the British should be forever established in Gibraltar, Malta and Crete. That simply will not do. We shall never come to durable agreements with the other Powers until we realise their point of view—and are prepared to meet them. The best method of meeting them may be hard to discover: but the search must be made. The plundering of the

LIFE WITHIN REASON

German Empire after the war by the Allies was a monstrous piece of folly : we did not really need these vast new spaces : we belied the pledges with which the Government called the nation to arms : the Mandate System, which the robbed and ejected could easily describe as so much hypocritical fudge, only made the robbery seem uglier. The British, already owning a vast Empire, went to war "on behalf of small nations," and came out with that Empire swollen by a new parcel containing no less than three quarters of a million square miles ! Can we wonder that the young German is bitter ? What should we feel in his position ?

The complacency of the English in this matter is frightening. When, for example, an American visitor remarks—as I have heard one quite politely say—that he gets a little tired of seeing the British Flag all over the world and British cruisers showing up everywhere, the common English attitude is one of complete astonishment and then of disgust with the fellow's impertinence. This crass kind of innocence, which never begins to realise that

TO SEE OURSELVES

Britain's far-flung battle-line is not just something in a patriotic song but is a definite fact and may be an irritation to those who see it, must be replaced as soon and as widely as possible by imaginative comprehension of the other man's point of view.

The position can be stated simply enough in figures. The population of Great Britain (excluding the Irish Free State) was just over 46 millions in 1931 : we might call it 47 now. That of the new German Reich is over 80 millions. The former's Empire covers close upon 14,000,000 square miles. In Africa alone we have 4,500,000 square miles. The latter has no colonies at all, having lost by forcible seizure those not impressive areas which it once possessed. If you consider that to be an equitable arrangement, and believe that the map of the world, dictated in 1919, is to be for ever valid in Africa, you can uphold it and probably some day you will have to uphold it by war. If, on the other hand, you have enough imagination to comprehend the feelings of the younger generation of Germans and to study, without Imperialist rage, their case against us,

LIFE WITHIN REASON

then you are surely bound to admit that the whole matter of Imperial Possessions must be opened up frankly and freely at a World Conference, and that we must be prepared to lose some of our vastly inflated Empire in return for peace. If it be argued that we must not be bullied into surrender by the dictators, the answer is that dragging in words like surrender and dictator is only a trivial dodge to obscure the issue, which is one of equity, and to rouse passion in people who ought to be above it, that if we do not come to terms now we may be forced to do so later on, that late traders may get very bad prices, as the Czechs discovered, and that the miserable habit of ultimately conceding to violence what we refused to reason must stop at last.

The history of the pillage of the German Empire, after all the Allies' protests about their hatred of Jingoism, is extremely interesting. Mr. Lloyd George has observed in *The Truth About the Peace Treaties* :

"No country was prepared to perpetuate the horrors of such a war merely for the sake of wresting the German colonies from German

TO SEE OURSELVES

control. Had Germany and her allies accepted in substance our terms peace could have been established in the month of January, 1917, instead of November, 1918, without the surrender by Germany of one of her over-seas possessions."

So far, so sensible. But before long total annexation had become the Allied policy. President Wilson made this the fifth of his famous fourteen points.

"A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the Government whose title is to be determined."

That is vague, but at least does not justify the rapine which took place at Versailles. Such was the greed then displayed that an excellent Liberal, E. S. Montagu, dryly remarked of the Allies' subsequent deliberations and decisions, "It would be very satisfactory if we could find some convincing argument for not annexing all the territories of the world."

To such a pass had the War for Democracy

LIFE WITHIN REASON

reduced the morale of its crusaders. The French were out for simple seizure of everything German, pledges or no pledges. Smuts was adamant for the taking of East Africa. Wilson and Lloyd George wanted to make Mandates a reality. But what really settled the seizure of the German Empire was pure Power Politics. There could be no disguising that hard fact. It would be strategically dangerous to leave Germany with anything : therefore Germany must lose all. Equity, justice, consideration of the natives, and so on, had nothing to do with the settlement. If Power Politics were good enough for the omnipotent conquerors of 1919, it is a little difficult to be furious with their victims for using their recovered power as an argument in 1939. The sad truth is that the Treaty of Versailles, and the betrayal of the Wilsonian points and pledges, gives us a very poor plinth from which to deliver in these days ethical homilies to the sons and heirs of defeated Germany. Most people, even the most Conservative, will probably now agree with Mr. J. L. Hammond that "the Allies would have done far better to have given some of the

TO SEE OURSELVES

German colonies back under a mandate system, to have made that system thoroughly effective, and made it universal for all such possessions. In this way a great contribution would have been made to the pacification and security of the world." It was not made. Imagination did not even begin to rise to its necessity.

In what form we should make concessions is not the immediate point. Whether we extend the Mandate System and try to make it less of a polite farce, or whether we cede outright to the old owners, one thing must certainly be made plain. Equity is good for its own sake and not as an escape or a convenience. Its value is diminished if it is only accepted in a fit of panic and with a sulky acquiescence. We must not be frightened or forced into equitable conduct as we have been so often in the past. Our mistake in remedying the real grievances of post-war Germany has been to wait for the threats instead of anticipating them.

The Treaty of Versailles was, in many respects, a travesty of equity. While pompously basing the armistice and the peace to follow it on the liberal principle of self-determination the Allies

LIFE WITHIN REASON

denied self-determination to Austria and invented a new State of Czecho-Slovakia, which was really another ramshackle empire, in which the Czechs endeavoured to clamp together four racial minorities, German, Slovak, Hungarian, and Polish, to whom representation was allowed but the vital right of self-determination was denied. Instead of giving up the impossible task of making a contented and unified nation and coming to terms with their minorities on a Cantonal basis or letting them go out in peace, the Czechs, backed by the French, who cynically used them as an anti-German asset, and as cynically dropped them when danger came, tried to hold on and did not realise that they had waited too long.

The Germans kept raising the price against these tardy dealers, won their point, and were ruthless in victory. So, in misery and shame for Czecho-Slovakia and its allies, there was ceded to the German Dictator's threats what should have been settled years before in amity with the German Republic. Our imaginations had not been at work. There had been warnings. But we could not look forward.

TO SEE OURSELVES

Where imagination is so necessary is in the fair assessment of a situation of this kind. Wherever there is immense suffering, there is bound to be righteous indignation against those who have caused it or seem, at the moment, to be primarily and immediately responsible. Righteous indignation is the very devil in politics. Its noble origin bestows upon it a kind of approval and authority. But wrath, however ethical its source, however virtuous its motive, however exalted its expression, continually clouds the mind and confuses the issue. So it happened that in October, 1938, you could have read column after column of abuse of Mr. Neville Chamberlain and the Munich Settlement written by people who considered themselves to be good democrats, liberals, self-determinationists and so forth. Yet nowhere, amid all that orgy of righteous indignation, would you have found any sort of admission that the settlement, however wrongly achieved in method, however scamped in time, and therefore rough in detail, however cruel to individuals and groups, was one which created more racial autonomy in the world, not less. The new boundaries were open

LIFE WITHIN REASON

to plenty of criticism. But I fail to see how any apostle of self-determination could describe them as worse than the old. They were, indeed, considerably fairer to the principle of racial unity. The Sudeten Germans were going where far the greater majority of them wanted to go. So were the Czecho-Slovakian Poles and Hungarians. The alternative to a settlement with Hitler was a war in which we could have been fairly described as the enemies of self-determination, the oppressors of racial minorities !

The whole thing was a frightful and disastrous muddle out of which Mr. Chamberlain somehow pulled at least a temporary peace, which, incidentally, did save the Czechs from what would probably have been almost total annihilation. The muddle stimulated that indignation of the righteous in which the elementary facts were largely forgotten. The righteous, when in rage, are apt to overlook the notion that there may be two sides to a case. Because the dictatorships are guilty of gross intolerance, it was suddenly assumed that all Czechs were angels of mercy and that no member of a minority had

TO SEE OURSELVES

ever been insulted or bullied in such a land of the free. My own, admittedly brief, experience in that Republic suggested very different goings on. I detest intolerance, whoever is guilty of it. The intolerance shown to Germans and the German language (even in the days of the peaceable German Republic) was deplorable. I had to leave one restaurant in Prague because an Austrian friend had given one small order in German to a Czech waiter, who had rounded on him with a stream of abuse. What had occurred was this. The order, merely a matter of two or three words, had been quite politely spoken. But, absent-mindedly, my friend had uttered these words in his own language, German. The waiter had taken this as an insult, lost his temper, and called my perfectly meek and blameless companion all sorts of foul names in public. A single incident, but informative. There is no doubt that the Sudeten Germans were treated in many ways as inferiors. The Czechs had been as badly treated by the Austrian ascendancy in the past and were enjoying their revenge. *The Fortnightly Review*, under the editorship of Mr. Horsfall Carter, will not be accused

LIFE WITHIN REASON

of undue conservatism or sympathy with dictatorships and their methods of rule. In the issue of October, 1938, along with some strong criticism of Franco-British policy, appeared an article by Mr. Robert Parker on Czecho-Slovakia's handling of its racial problems. This he described as "Intolerable." The Czechs, he said, "proceeded systematically to 'Czechise' the thoroughly German territories in their State. In German towns and villages Czech officials, who spoke no word of German and did not wish to, were introduced. . . . In their blind hate against the economic supremacy of the Germans the Czechs set out to cripple and even destroy all the industries in the German frontier districts. This caused widespread suffering." Now I do not quote this in order to hit a small nation when it is down, but because so much progressive opinion in this country, in its natural wrath against Germany, proceeded blindly to idealise the Czechs and to pretend that they had never been inclement or intolerant. The Czechs enjoyed nearly two decades of ascendancy over their past oppressors and were recklessly oppressive themselves. All that talk

TO SEE OURSELVES

of last-minute concessions was the proof of too tardy an awakening. They could have settled with Germany amicably before Hitler came. But they dallied to their own danger and so encountered "wild justice" in the end. Our treatment of the Spanish Government was far worse than our treatment of Prague. There was no case whatever for denying it the means of purchasing self-defensive weapons in a war against wanton rebellion. But Left Wing sympathy was far more stirred by the Czechs than by the Spaniards; the spectacular grievance outweighed the older and more real one. Is it necessary to assert that one is *not* supporting Nazi methods and being "Pro-Hitler" if one occasionally points out that intolerance is not limited to one country or to one form of government ? It flourishes wherever there is a lack of political imagination.

That quality, so essential to the establishment of peace and the substitution of reason for passion in the determination of policy, may very well be applied to a phrase much used at present, Power Politics. It is commonly assumed that only the dictatorships are addicted to this form

LIFE WITHIN REASON

of diplomacy in which the power to seize or to hold is regarded as ample justification, without moral grounds added, for seizing and holding whatever it may be convenient and profitable thus to annex and occupy. To the unimaginative person, heavily charged as a rule with the heady liquors of righteous indignation, it is always the other fellow who is guilty of putting force before justice. The mental confusions of the indignant were sadly obvious during the Czech crisis. The Germans had to be abominated because they were Power-Politics men and backed their claim (a fair one in equity) to transference of the Sudeten territory by mobilising large masses of troops on the frontier. There was an equitable case for the cession of that territory and the British could not deny it, at least in general. But what the anti-German party, full of fiery and virtuous phrases about democracy, did say was that the Czechs must keep the territory for strategic reasons. It was conveniently mountainous. It was their serviceable boundary. Moreover, a strong and independent Czecho-Slovakia fortifying these mountainous strongholds was of great value

TO SEE OURSELVES

to France and Great Britain as a defensive outpost against Germany in the East. That was plainly true. But the argument, so blithely used by people considering themselves to be essentially ethical in their philosophy, was wholly unethical. It was true Power Politics, an argument after Hitler's or Mussolini's own heart. Were the Sudeten Germans to rejoin their fellow-countrymen and to be absorbed, according to their choice, in the Reich ? Intolerable thought ! It would disappoint the War Offices in Paris and London. And what does equity count compared with such security ?

We have to clear up our minds on matters of this kind. We cannot continue to lecture the world on the iniquity of Power Politics while continuing to practise them ourselves. Great Britain, having the greatest of Empires, naturally occupies enormous territories to which our claim is solely that of forcible possession. We can argue, if we like, that our administration has been better than that of most other Empires, that our settlers have brought peace and prosperity to the natives whose land we have annexed. This argument, which is sometimes

LIFE WITHIN REASON

true and sometimes not, is far truer, for example, in West Africa than in East, truer in Malaya than Jamaica. But, if anyone wants to challenge our ethical position as an Imperial Power and accuse us of humbug, he can do so with plenty of material for his indictment. The point about Empires, as about other matters in this world, is that one thing leads to another. One act of seizure must provoke further annexations, because it is necessary to keep up communications and to safeguard one's property from flank attacks. An India necessitates a Gibraltar, while Far Eastern properties demand a Singapore. We take and hold such places as Imperial Necessities and we shall not leave them except under pressure of superior force. That is Power Politics which, when practised by others, is regarded as an immoral, odious, and insufferable doctrine. We ourselves do not care to admit our reliance upon force. It is so much nicer to talk of our duty. There is nothing, as Mr. Shaw has observed, which an Englishman will not do—and call it his duty. We have so little imagination that we expect other nations to be impressed, instead of being infuriated, by all

TO SEE OURSELVES

this. We naturally think of the inevitable British cruiser as a symbol of liberty and of the freedom of the seas. But Americans, even those most inclined to be well disposed to us on the whole, do not always see it in that way. They can be sharply critical of the fine moral talk with which we clothe our imperial purposes. That, of course, is a method of behaviour in which they are equally adept themselves. The dictatorships have at least a certain refreshing frankness in the manner in which they discuss their adventures in the world of Power Politics. When they prepare and use force, they say so. It may be naughty, but at least it is a candid way of doing business.

The importance of imagination as an aid to reason in politics is therefore as great in the Imperial Democracies as anywhere else. Because we are democracies as well as Empires we are apt to forget that the philosophy of the former can strongly contradict the working methods of the latter, a fact which easily wins us a reputation for hypocrisy. But, you may say, cultivating a sympathetic vision of the other man's position and of the way in which

LIFE WITHIN REASON

his mind is working is easy advice and, in any case, achieves no action. Action for peace is what is needed. What is there to do? The answer is to meet in argument before you meet in battle, to make the peace treaty before the war, not after it. It may be impossible to find a durable accommodation between the democracies and the dictatorships, but it should never be said that the democracies failed in imaginative power.

The whole question of colonies is infinitely complicated because colonies are not chattels. They are inhabited areas whose inhabitants are at richly assorted stages of mental and political development. If you are to consult "colonial opinion" on any matter of transfer or alteration of a Mandate, what exactly does "colonial opinion" mean? Does it include black and white on equal terms? The argument that territory should never be ceded without local plebiscite or some such democratic authority sounds well. But the German colonies were annexed without questions asked, and one can easily imagine their previous owners bluntly inquiring why democratic process, so unnecessary

TO SEE OURSELVES

twenty years ago, is now so essential. To find quick solutions of this confused and prickly problem may be beyond all contrivance and diplomatic ingenuity. What can be done is to go into conference while there is time and some remaining element of good temper, and not to wait for the sabre-rattling, the angry demands, the sullen refusals, the frantic, last-minute chaffering and the hustled hunt for formulæ. The diplomatic history of the last two decades has been a melancholy document in which the words imagination, sympathy, and vision scarcely appear at all. The Germans were continually driven to seize with violence or threats of violence that to which their right was manifest, the fortification of their own country, Union with Austria, the Sudeten lands. The reasonable plea was always snubbed; the rapid stroke of force was always accepted. In the case of the colonial demand, are we to continue this senseless and calamitous course of refusing the parley of reason and surrendering at the show of might ?

CHAPTER VII

AIDS TO REASON

IF what has been said here about war contains any truth, man should be able to hammer out a peace policy with reason as his premier implement. But other tools are needed, as a survey of the obstacles to peace will quickly suggest. Previous democratic theory has concerned itself with the natural goodness and natural wisdom of man and made, as we saw, some astounding assumptions on these matters. It is necessary to remember that wisdom is a wide term and includes—or should in any sound reckoning of human values include—not logic and calculation only but imagination, sympathy and that sense of humour which restores and sustains proportion.

In trying to establish a liberal way of life we shall certainly be tripped up if we regard human nature as a constant element, the same in detach-

AIDS TO REASON

ment as in association. It is difficult to generalise about man in any case : it is completely impossible unless we first specify his condition. Are we discussing man the private person, or man the member of a multitude ? It is unfortunately true that those two are apt to behave in drastically different ways, and still more unfortunate for our political hopes that man the political animal is altogether less likeable and praiseworthy than man the individual. To aver that man organised is man brutalised is a sweeping statement which makes insufficient allowance for the courage and self-sacrifice which corporate loyalties may evoke. There are times when association may bring out the best in individuals, but on the whole that ugly but all too common miracle, whereby the sensible and decent fellow is suddenly moved to behave like a total fool and raging fiend, is achieved by putting not two and two together but one and one hundred. So the man who would be ashamed to express blind hate and mean jealousy and to confess wild fear of a neighbour in privacy will do so gleefully as one of a mob.

LIFE WITHIN REASON

The scruples of the man are dropped by the citizen of a mighty nation. The State, accordingly, is always permitted, even encouraged, to do things which the average person would not care to do in his everyday life. As Mr. Aldous Huxley has shrewdly put it, "The personified nation is divine in size, strength, and mystical superiority, but sub-human in moral character. . . . The divine nation of whom the citizen is mystically a part bullies and cheats, blusters and threatens in a way which many people find profoundly satisfying to their sedulously repressed lower natures. Submissive to the wife, kind to the children, courteous to the neighbours, the soul of honesty in business, the good citizen feels a thrill of delight when his country 'takes a strong line,' 'enhances its prestige,' 'scores a diplomatic victory,' 'increases its territory,' in other words, when it bluffs, bullies, swindles, and steals." That is unfortunately true. The team-spirit often provokes the ugliest passions in people who are perfectly reasonable in calm moments of isolation. Once, when I had been perhaps too hopefully remarking on the decent placidity of the ordinary Englishman,

AIDS TO REASON

a shrewd social observer said, "Go to a football match and wait till there's a referee's decision on a doubtful point. These fellows are placid about politics because they don't really care much about them, but give them something that matters, like a Cup-Tie, and they can show a bit of ugliness."

When partisanship touches local or national pride, and there are thousands closely massed on whom the venom can work, reason stands a poor chance of mastering wrath. It is the same in State affairs as in sporting contests. We indulge in prejudice and passion in a way of which we should be thoroughly ashamed if we performed thus in the privacy of the home. The ethics of political elections permit lying on a scale which, if discovered in our children, would be regarded as outrageous. In the heat of a party struggle pledges are often given without the slightest intention to redeem them, and in the case of national conflict the moral debauchery is far worse. If those who are too young to remember the last war will read the matter up, they will find plenty to convince them of the total collapse of moral standards

LIFE WITHIN REASON

which hatred and fear, acting on men and women in the mass, can bring about. But, even without the disintegrating influence of war, "man in the lump is bad," as the saying goes, or at least not so teachable or so open to reason as in the "unlumped" state. Mr. Huxley is right. We use the State as a release for our inhibited impulses to cheat, bully, and bluster. Many of us know citizens of the totalitarian States ; in business and in friendship and in professional or scientific co-operation they are reasonable and delightful people. Yet when they are seen as members of a political body they become entirely different. All sense of proportion is lost, scruple weakens, shame disappears. We need not be self-righteous. We doubtless are viewed in the same way by them. The totalitarian will easily descry faults of greed and hypocrisy in the democracies to which we are mainly blind.

Our canons of conduct vary enormously according to whether it is an individual or a community that is acting. What in private life we should call flat burglary, in public affairs is called "establishing a sphere of legitimate in-

AIDS TO REASON

terests." He who steals a can of oil goes to prison; he who lays hands upon an oil-field is safeguarding imperial communications, exercising a natural right for commercial expansion, or protecting the original owners from being robbed by others. Time and again this last excuse for breaking-in and stealing is used in foreign politics. The invader has always come in with the noblest intentions. He is seeking to protect the native from another invader. What would happen to a burglar who argued in court that, if he did steal the jewels, he only did so in order to protect them from loss by fire? Yet stuff no less preposterous is talked by the diplomat.

Only by exercising a continual check on ourselves can we avoid this wretched surrender of integrity which membership of the mass involves. It is vitally important to be continually analysing the cant and jargon of diplomacy, asking what in real fact are these "Imperial interests" and probing the true significance of such a slogan as "national prestige." Reason alone will be a serviceable aid against the corrupting influence of the crowd, but reason armed with imagination and a sense of humour will be doubly powerful.

LIFE WITHIN REASON

The last of these is of especial value in political life. Autocracy flourishes most when there is least capacity for mirth. The tyrants and powerful noblemen of old showed instinctive wisdom by keeping a licensed jester. His was a perilous profession and, as folly's whip, he went in constant risk of a whipping. But the Court and the community were healthier for his right and his capacity to show authority its image in the glass of comedy. The portrait of Panjandrum in a mirror is a salutary spectacle. The modern dictatorships have no such resident cure for self-importance. Can one imagine Stalin appointing a Clown to attend all Commissars, beginning with himself, or Hitler summoning an Official Fool to Berchtesgaden? Alas, no! The world would be safer for such genial presences and for the puncturing power of their wit. British democracy, forbidden to enjoy political satire on the stage, a pleasure common to Paris and New York, has its sharp pictorial cartoonists and its own sense of acid comment, anecdote, and raillery. "These foolish things" you may call them. But, when a political and national folly surges up on the grand

AIDS TO REASON

scale, they act as febrifuge and cooling draught. When a nation forgets how to laugh, more especially how to laugh at itself, it goes in danger of committing fatal errors and yielding its fortunes to the man whose self-assertion is his principal asset as a saviour of the people.

In his preface to *The Flashing Stream*, a remarkable play about the single-minded type of devotee, Mr. Charles Morgan not long ago delivered a violent attack on the British addiction to this dismissive, deprecating, deflating tendency which is summed up in "sense of humour." "Its strength is that it intends no evil. Those who most elaborately cultivate it are unaware that it is a vice and, indeed, suppose it to be a virtue. In their view it is a means of preserving a desirable mental balance, a refusal of extravagant emotion, a wise choice of understatement and the middle way." But in Mr. Morgan's opinion :

"It has banished tragedy from our theatre, eloquence from our debates, glory from our years of peace, splendour from our wars : it has so mocked, at opposite extremes, the spirit of Milton and the spirit of Keats that to be a

LIFE WITHIN REASON

puritan or a romantic is to be accounted equally absurd and there are no heroes but in celluloid. One by one it has damped the sparks of life, art, love, duty, faith, until the Bible has begun to vanish from our language and Romeo himself speaks to Juliet as if he were a dumb-waiter offering her an ice. It is talent's sneer at genius, in whatever form genius appear. It is mediocrity's hatred of the Spirit of Man, a blanket on vision, a yelp at saints."

That is a finely phrased assault on the mood of facile denigration, "debunking," and dismissing everything as a "racket" which was a recent curse of English and American life. But the single-mindedness which Mr. Morgan praises is not an absolute virtue : its value depends wholly on the application. Are there none single-minded in crassness and brutality ? And would not a blanket on their folly and a yelp at their cruelty be useful in such cases ? The man who looks round a thing as well as into it, the many-minded man, may miss the specialist's fine frenzy, his sudden intellectual penetration, and the rapture which goes therewith, but he is able to save us from the criminal blunders which

AIDS TO REASON

are so often produced by total absorption in a cause or a calling. Fanaticism must have its bridle and there is none better than a sense of humour. By all means let us pay no heed to cheap and easy scoffing at matters of high enterprise ; no less let us remember that, in establishing the realm of reason in the affairs of man, it may be easier to dismiss unreason by laughing it out of court than by knocking it on the head. To laugh at self-importance makes it unimportant : to wound it with a blow makes it a martyr and so doubly important in the affections of the sentimental majority. Let us bear in mind the instance of *Twelfth Night*. A sense of humour was the proper cudgel for the pompous vanities of Malvolio : we laugh to see him gulled. But once the punishment becomes a persecution he is restored to our sympathy. When he protests that he has been most notoriously abused, we feel the truth of it. Sir Toby and his friends have thrown their victory away. The Malvolios of the State, who are always and everywhere many, can be better schooled by laughter than by battery. Even abominable tyrannies and such monstrous insti-

LIFE WITHIN REASON

tutions as War can be exposed as well by the jester as by the preacher. There may be quicker remedy in wit's quietly deflating needle than in the resounding fusillade of righteous indignation. Therefore, I put sense of humour, along with the sense of proportion which it serves, as reason's first aid in the maintenance of a liberal society. The power to see a joke is essential to the democratic way of life.

The place of humour in advancing serious causes has never been sufficiently considered. It should have a far larger place than it at present possesses, particularly in any campaign for the attention of the younger people, who have so largely been brought up on American films and are thoroughly accustomed to a tough, wise-cracking kind of fun. Sermons about the wickedness, warnings about the horrors of war are likely to be far less effective with these potential warriors than a sharp shower of ridicule aimed at the preposterous idiocy of all this drilling and digging of holes by mystified innocents in order to destroy some other anonymous and equally mystified and innocent drillers and diggers of holes. Mr. J. B. Priestley, in an

AIDS TO REASON

essay on *The Public and the Idea of Peace*, has stated the case for killing Mars by mockery with characteristic clarity and vigour.

"The romantic hot-head, with his assortment of well-tried metaphors, can survive any number of pacifist appeals and warnings, but laughter kills him at once. Too many people who work hard for the cause of international security are dull dogs, who drone on and on and on until nobody knows or cares what they are saying. They have not a chance against the other side, with its flags and uniforms and brass bands and parades and mass-emotions. The only thing to do is to make the gentleman who is roaring about mailed fists, shining armour, hearts of oak, look the fool he is, and to demonstrate clearly that the war to which he is leading us would not be a fine adventure but a stupendous piece of slapstick, a farce as big as a continent. Some of the comic war films, such as Chaplin's *Shoulder Arms* and the clowning war-sketches that appeared in the music-halls just after 1918, were better peace propaganda than all the serious war reminiscences and stories."

One thing the appalling crisis of September,

LIFE WITHIN REASON

1938, did seem to prove. In no country was there any general appetite for war among the older people. The German public was even more horrified at the prospect than our own. But nobody could tell what would have been the results of the first big air-raid in the creation of hatred, blood-lust, and revengeful passion. People may enter a war with the most austere and noble conviction that they are forced to do this evil that good may come ; they are fighting for every virtue on the Christian list, as we were repeatedly told in 1914. But once a single baby has been killed by a bomb, the moral temper of a whole nation rapidly declines to a frenzy of desire for carnage, and national leaders will frankly admit that what had begun as a crusade has now become a dog-fight to a finish. That is why I often feel extremely frightened by the glib talk of "standing up to aggressors" so popular now among some elderly civilians on Left Wing platforms. One is given the idea that by "standing up to aggressors" it is possible to enter upon a Nice Moral War. But no war, however chivalrously undertaken, remains nice and moral for more than a few

AIDS TO REASON

moments. The supporters of Wars to end War, whether they were roaring on the recruiting stages of 1914 or are eloquent at the present-day meetings of the League of Nations Union, are altogether too simple and sanguine in their belief that violence can remain virtuous. War may at some time be inevitable, things being what they are, but let no man enter upon it with the ridiculous illusions so dear to the bellicose moralist of our peace platforms.

On the other hand, people are not easily frightened into a reasonable attitude to international affairs by dwelling on the horrors of the battlefield. No doubt digging trenches in the parks and fitting everybody with a gas-mask can have a salutary effect on those inclined to talk lightly about "teaching the foreigner a lesson." But one reason why pacifist propaganda has made so little advance in general is the fact that suffering and sacrifice can exercise a definite allure. So far from men playing up to the Utilitarian doctrine and rationally pursuing their own safety, pleasure, and advantage, they often seem to be drawn on by the prospect of discomfort and even of agony and death. This

LIFE WITHIN REASON

masochistic tendency, as the psychologists would call it, is easily observable in the millions of young men who are marching and sweating under heavy packs and living the stunted, stupid, slavish life of the conscript soldier all over the world. If they sufficiently loathed the whole silly business, the whole silly business would have to stop. But very large numbers of people find satisfaction in discomfort and bliss in those various forms of martyrdom which modern life affords. The eternal parading of the soldier may be a bore, the last mile of a long march may be an agony, like the last lap of a runner's hard-fought race, the bloody, half-stunned resistance of a spent boxer, or the final, excruciating efforts of the exhausted oarsman. But dangerous sports, such as rock-climbing or sailing small boats in squally weather, have never lacked adherents, even after the warning of bad accidents. In the same way games and exercises which involve the most wearisome, painful, and distressing forms of drudgery can be very popular.

The attraction lies, presumably, in the retrospect. It is not nice to be rowing at full stretch

AIDS TO REASON

for four and a quarter miles for your University eight : but it is nice to *have* rowed. To have undergone ardours and endurances for the School or the Side is agreeable—when the job is done. One hangs an oar on the wall and a cap beside it, symbols of great toils and triumphs. Vanity can be a keen spur to long-suffering. In the same way soldiers, called upon or compelled to face the extremities of discomfort, of deprivation, and of danger, will find some relish in their miseries, enough at any rate to prevent them from rebelling against the idiocy of war. It is not only fear of discipline and the death-penalty which keeps them in the barracks or the ranks. Like the athletes, they can find pleasure in pain. The burden which is physically difficult is often psychologically easy.

Furthermore, the ever-powerful drive of the herd-instinct is working on the side of the militarists. There are no more doubts and hesitations, no torments of choice and responsibility, for the man who has been called up or conscribed. He is one of the pack. He can bury his head among a thousand other heads. He will not have to use it any more.

LIFE WITHIN REASON

Men will put up with a great deal of bodily anguish in order to avoid the horrid necessity of using the mind. To be in the ranks is in one way to be a slave, in another to be free, free of brain-work, free of conscience.

It is a curious fact that men, who are still the principal physical sufferers in war, have, as a sex, less appetite for life than women. They commit suicide in far greater numbers, three men to one woman, except in Japan where self-destruction is a well-favoured masculine exercise. One would think that the miseries of war-time and the pressure of its fears would send up the suicide-rate, but exactly the reverse happens. When people might be thought to be most unhappy they are most eager to go on living. Man does not live on bread alone, but on thrills, however ugly and uncomfortable be their species. Here is how Mr. Aldous Huxley views this curious fact of psychology :

“Many people like war because they find their peace-time occupations either positively humiliating and frustrating, or just negatively boring. In their studies on suicide Durkheim and, more recently, Halbwachs have shown

AIDS TO REASON

that the suicide-rate among non-combatants tends to fall during war-time to about two-thirds of its normal figure. This decline must be put down to the following causes : to the simplification of life during war-time (it is in complex and highly developed societies that the suicide-rate is the highest) ; to the intensification of nationalist sentiment to a point where most individuals are living in a state of chronic enthusiasm ; to the fact that life during war-time takes on significance and purposefulness, so that even the most intrinsically boring job is ennobled as 'war-work'. . . ."

He further points out that the suicide-rate went down even in neutral countries between 1914 and 1918, because the world was so eventful. Thrills abounded. The newspapers seemed to be equally compounded of blood and ink. What is called the Freudian Death-wish certainly seems to be flourishing in Europe to-day. If the millions who are drilling and marching and preparing to kill and to be killed were really determined to have no more of it, they could surely make their many-million-man-power felt on the side of peace. Of course thousands do

LIFE WITHIN REASON

loathe it all and realise its futility. But we must argue from the myriads, not the thousands, and in that case we must reluctantly agree with Miss Rebecca West, who, in an essay on *Man and Religion*, after exposing the pretence that men hate war, has thus acutely analysed and described the masculine impulse for personal self-sacrifice and even for racial immolation. "Men," she wrote, "liked wearing themselves out in contention, as they showed by their love of fighting in their schooldays (see such commemorations of barbarism as *Tom Brown's Schooldays*), so that they should have less energy left over for the pestilent responsibility of living. They liked exchanging the burdensome freedom of the will for the psychologically easy servitude of military discipline. They liked the possibility of a premature and communally sanctioned death. True that they loved life, too, but not enough. If they were resolute in cherishing their own individual sparks of being, they were yet prepared to make the most sweeping renunciations of the continued existence of the race. Whenever a country or civilization carried life beyond a

AIDS TO REASON

certain point it inevitably resorted to war as a counterpoise to its achievement ; and century after century it would proceed on its journey towards nullity until the baffled forces of life had to find a place for their burgeoning in some other quarter of the globe."

The willingness to torture and degrade the body, so prominent in the lives of many saints, she regards as significantly masculine and similar to the soldiering, self-destructive impulse of the secular man. I remember that, when I was at school, a boy of great promise and achievement in work and play used to assert that his only wish in life was to be killed fighting for his country. That was shortly before 1914 : no doubt his morbid craving for extinction was satisfied all too soon.

What, the despairing reader may well ask, are we to do about so odd a creature as man, how seek to keep alive the owner of a Death-wish, how bring felicity to those so enamoured of suffering and fatigue, how save the infatuated self-destroyer ? Is war really what man chiefly wants ? The answer is not easily found. The spread of reason should in time overcome

LIFE WITHIN REASON

neurotic cravings for self-sacrifice and self-extinction. The common sense of people has arranged for the removal or sublimation of some of these impulses in the usually harmless process of sport. The spectator at a Rugby Football Match who sees a small half-back falling on the ball, hurling his unarmoured body before the heavily-booted feet of eight monstrous forwards, might justly conclude that the little fellow's chief motive for such seemingly preposterous conduct was a particularly powerful dose of the Death-wish. However, very few football players are killed, at least in Great Britain, and the number badly injured is far less than one expects. The mauls and tackles and tumblings of the game are undoubtedly releasing the inhibited bellicosity of human nature lurking in youth's combative vigour.

It may be argued that the devotees of blood-sports likewise release upon birds and animals the desire for carnage and conquest which the sportsman, if not given this opportunity, might direct towards his fellow-men. So the social peace of England is in some sort assisted by the hunting of foxes and the pelleting of pheasants !

AIDS TO REASON

There must be an element of truth certainly in the view that violent and painful exercise may dispel morbidity. The Victorian schoolmasters, who invented the moral aspects of game-playing, hitherto regarded as a self-indulgent and even discreditable form of time-killing, and turned cricket into a sub-section of Christianity, emphasised the value of the play-ground exercise as a mitigator of sexual desires and of the brooding consequent upon lack of their fulfilment. Bowen of Harrow, the most enthusiastic pioneer and supporter of the English Public School athleticism, tells the following story : *

“The day I began to write this essay, a captain of a house football eleven asked me to go down to his house game that day. There was a small local trouble ; two important boys had a quarrel on, and it was very awkward, and, in short, he wanted to be advised. I played, and everything went on as usual. After it was over, I asked about the quarrel. It had vanished into

* Quoted in *After Puritanism*, by Hugh Kingsmill, whose psychological analysis of some great Victorian men and institutions is particularly valuable.

LIFE WITHIN REASON

the delight of exercise and the glory of the play.”

He would have been more accurate if he had said the agonies of exercise and the fury of the play. For it is the facing of extreme fatigue and the taking of blows and risks, always a considerable part of most open-air sports, which render these pastimes such suitable alternatives to actual fighting and warfare. Highly militarised nations, and advocates of militarism among less warlike peoples, have often joined the short-sighted pacifist in sneering at and discouraging games. Rightly, from their own point of view. The furious footballer may be a fierce soldier lost. Rudyard Kipling's famous jeers at cricket and football were perfectly logical. “The muddied oaf at the goal” was an oaf wasted. According to good imperialist doctrine the fellow was squandering his strength: he ought to have been kicking one of the lesser breeds instead of a mere football.

So there are excellent reasons for encouraging diversity of sports, even of dangerous sports, in a community which is aspiring to live in a

AIDS TO REASON

peaceful and reasonable way. I should hesitate to add blood-sports, because it is a trifle hard on the fox and the grouse that we should use them as alternative victims and targets to our fellow-men. In any case it is surely true that the people who expend their surplus energy, when work is over, by rolling each other in the mud or climbing perilously up the mountain-face, when they could safely walk up it from behind, are satisfying in a more or less harmless way instincts and desires which might easily be turned to violent and vicious forms of action. Of course there is always the danger that those who watch dangerous sports may be debauched by the stimulation and satisfaction of sadistic impulses. The crowds who dote upon dirt-track motor-cycle races, all-in wrestling, and the furious combats of the ice-hockey rink certainly have something in common with the Romans of the old arena. They may deny that the possibility of bloodshed attracts them : but their denial is not convincing.

The proper use of muscle as an aid to the proper use of reason is a subject of extreme interest and importance. The idea that a

LIFE WITHIN REASON

National Fitness Campaign and the ubiquitous supply of playing-fields are designed simply to provide bigger and better bomb-fodder is a shallow one. A Communist class-warrior can justly complain that, by making a footballer of the brisk young proletarian, we diminish his fighting-value as a Marxian recruit. Yet, if that is true, it is no less fair to maintain that a nation of boxers, wrestlers, footballers, climbers, and so on will be less likely to make a nuisance of itself in the international scene. We may hope for a time when reason will reign without these assistances, a time when it will be unnecessary to find safe outlets and by-passes for the violent and self-assertive passions, the will to victory, and the craving for all forms of forceful domination. But the rule of the philosopher-king, suggested by Plato nearly two and a half thousand years ago, has not yet arrived, and in shaping our policies we have still to bear the muddled oaf in mind. Human morbidity is more common than we imagine or care to remember. The myriads who delighted to watch an execution are now represented by the ghouls who hang about the prison on the morning of an execution

AIDS TO REASON

or swarm to the scene of a murder, gaping for hours at some dreary little villa wherein a tragedy has taken place. When the Torso Mystery was being investigated in the West Country many family parties spent Sunday picnicking with their small children by the banks of the Severn where the police were dragging the bed of the river for further sections of a dismembered corpse.

In facing the problems of war-psychology these creatures, who are numerous, must not be forgotten. The pacifist's problem is not one of reasoning alone : it is quite as much a question of applying psychological therapy to the twisted motives and emotions of mankind.

CHAPTER VIII

MIND AND MACHINES

POLITICAL theory in the past was able to treat of human nature as an isolated, almost an invariable, element. It was assumed, as we have seen, by one party that man was born free or for freedom, that he had a certain number of inalienable rights attached to him at birth, and that, according to his desires and merits and capacities, he would proceed to assert those rights of his. Other thinkers took other and less hopeful views, holding, perhaps, that large numbers of people were naturally servile and only fit to be the animate implements of labour for the advantage of their social and mental betters. (This assumption of a radical human inequality has always been the defence of slavery, whether in Ancient Greece or more recent America.) But circumstances alter cases, and the habit of basing political ideas and consequent political practice on a constant

MIND AND MACHINES

view of the human element is absurd. This human element, with its problems and potentialities, is enormously affected by external factors, especially by mechanical changes, and accidents of scientific discovery. The invention of highly skilled machines made nonsense of the "living tool" theory by which Aristotle defended slavery. It was absurd to pin down large numbers of human beings to the status of wood and iron, when the wood and iron were becoming able to do their jobs almost automatically.

In the same way modern discovery has drastically altered the nature of public opinion, its means of instruction, and the technique of persuasion. Since democracy depends upon the freedom, vigour, spontaneity, and effectiveness of public opinion, we may firmly say that the new machine has changed the old problem of government from top to bottom, and changed it, alas, in the direction of far greater complexity. The earliest democracies were ruled by the spoken word. The people, or those deemed to be full citizens, met : the speakers spoke : the vote was taken. Did this mean all power to the skilful orator, the canny rhetorician ? It

LIFE WITHIN REASON

certainly conferred a great deal of power upon him, and made the study of rhetoric a most valuable part of any education or training for public life. But we must remember that the decision of a Public Meeting or of a House of Representatives had to be conveyed to the public by word of mouth. In an early city-state or small democratic community a proclamation could be announced by a herald in the market-place or it could be posted up in hand-writing, but it would be conveyed from home to home, from farm to farm, by report and conversation. The citizens would therefore have a chance to interpret and criticise, while reporting, decisions : when there are no newspapers, above all when there is no wireless, the individual voice, expressing and covering the news in an individual way, naturally has more importance than in the modern democracy where one newspaper, itself a member of a vast chain, may have two million purchasers and may be read by six million persons every day and where broadcasting, through a series of stations controlled by one central authority, if not by the State, reaches the ears of almost the entire nation.

MIND AND MACHINES

Word of mouth leads to rumours and legends, we know, but could any legend be more fantastic than those imposed upon modern multitudes by the new-model propaganda of a State-controlled machine working through an omnipotent Ministry of Information? If the influence of the orator was dangerous, it was certainly far less menacing than is the power of print over those who have been taught to read but not to think or are even forbidden to think on penalty of incarceration or actually of death itself. Democracy which depended on talk created a certain critical power in its possibly unschooled citizen. If a man could only acquire and spread news by listening and repeating, it was inevitable that he should let his wits work upon what he heard and was told, unless he were a witless creature altogether.

It has often occurred to me, and presumably it has likewise occurred to most other people who keep their ears open, that the kind of conversation on political and economic matters which you may hear and join at a village inn really contains a good deal more common sense than does a similar type of conversation

LIFE WITHIN REASON

in an urban saloon-bar, a polite drawing-room, or an august club smoking-room. It is not merely that the ploughman and the shepherd, when they talk of soil and horses, sheep and wool, talk of that which they care for and comprehend in a way that no stock-broker cares for or comprehends the mysteries of high finance. The land-worker can be trusted, as a rule, to talk with an excellently earthy kind of prudence about the affairs of the State as well as of the farm. The reason for that is that his head is not so easily filled with catchwords, slogans, and set phrases. He was probably not at school for long and he has forgotten what book-learning he obtained there. He only reads the paper, if at all, on Sunday and then he does so to be informed rather about the sins of society than concerning the problems of the politicians. If he is not a "listener" to the B.B.C. (many cottagers cannot afford to be) he really is in the position of the first democrats who learned the news by hearsay and appraised it by native wit. This may provide far better results than does learning the news by a glance at standardised headlines and appraising it with

MIND AND MACHINES

the standardised comment expressed in the dull, lifeless idiom of the ordinary leading article.

This argument should not be taken to imply complete contempt for education. I do not advocate the salvation of democracy by the destruction of schools and by a colossal bonfire of grammars, dictionaries, and newspapers. But it is surely obvious that a very great hazard is run by a democratic community which prepares its citizens for the exercise of power by turning them out of school with just enough capacity to read a slogan and not enough mental acumen to ask what the silly thing means or at what cost it can be translated into a reality.

The danger becomes the more acute as the means of communication become more effective and more centralised. The old Radicals who believed that everything would come right if people were only taught enough because, having comprehended the Good, they would immediately and triumphantly pursue it, forgot to consider that teaching is a vague term. Thus teaching may only produce a smattering of verbal culture so that the people alleged to have

LIFE WITHIN REASON

been taught can repeat imposing phrases without the ability to analyse them. The development of advertising and the arts of salesmanship has rendered modern crowds particularly susceptible to phrases. So the citizen of to-day is an easy victim for any spell-binder, more especially if that cozenor knows how to use the printed word with the maximum cunning of type-craft and a useful mastery of the tricks of the writer's trade. So it happens that your tough old shepherd or ploughman, who does not read five hundred words a week, may be far better able to detect a fallacy or discern the emptiness of a gaudy phrase than the glib product of a thin scholastic literacy. The class and cost of the school does not matter. If it does not teach its pupils to look below words and seek out their realities and factual content, then it is a bad school. The first business of education is to teach meanings. Not long ago I read a book of memoirs by an Old Etonian who seemed to be largely innocent of grammar and syntax. Yet he was not altogether a bad advertisement for the costliest school in England. He showed signs of ordinary sense ; though one of the

MIND AND MACHINES

highest in the land, he had something in common with a ploughman, which was much to his credit.

The curse of the new machinery, which has so hugely extended the range of communication, is the centralising power which it inevitably confers. The existence of telephony, with or without wires, has been generally regarded as a great convenience. Certainly there are times when it is very useful to establish rapid relations and discover what is happening. But, on the whole, these inventions cause quite as much trouble as they remove. If you gain by the ability to ring up and find out, you lose by your exposure to the ringing of others. If, because you have a car, you can go and see so-and-so, you find yourself obliged to make journeys which you would never have thought of making in the old days. The freedom which your triumph over space, in air or on land, is supposed to convey is really a bondage at the same time. More and more people regard escape from the telephone as essential to a true holiday. Hence one cause for the popularity of foreign travel and of cruising. In the last resort we can still be got

LIFE WITHIN REASON

at while at sea, but there is more chance of peace.

This, however, by the way. A far more pressing nuisance of our time is the destruction of responsibility to which quick and cheap communications expose us with increasing force. Cheap printing and postage have their harmful as well as their beneficial aspects. But the real danger here lies with the telephone. It is often assumed that a nation's prosperity and alertness and well-being can be assessed by reckoning the number of telephones per head of population. No doubt to be a nation of incessant "ringers-up" proves modernity of outlook, if that is worth anything. But the point is that the ability to consult another deprives people of the right and duty to decide for themselves. The man who is running a local branch of a business is more and more dictated to by his superiors, who dislike the idea of his taking a chance on his own account without asking for guidance and authority. With communications so easy there is a natural tendency to insist on reference to Head Office : the initiative of the young is checked and centralisa-

MIND AND MACHINES

tion grows apace. There used to be a person called the Man on the Spot. He is now very often only the Man at the End of a Wire.

From the Radical point of view centralisation must always be suspect. Unless it can be proved to bring about overwhelming economies or vast increase of efficiency, we shall regard it as essentially bad for the health of society. It produces such a bloated monstrosity of a city as modern London, which saps the vitality of the provinces and has become an altogether clumsy, ungovernable, and dangerous unit. It also produces the mass-mind. It is idle to formulate theories about the Will of the People and the beauties of Self-government in the old way of political philosophy without relating this sovereign thing called Public Opinion to the actual way in which it is formed and influenced. As was said at the beginning of this chapter, scientific invention and discovery have altered the whole nature of the problem. They have centralised the dispersion of news and the imparting of views. The rapid printing of papers by the million, for example, coupled with rapid distribution by car and train, has greatly assisted

LIFE WITHIN REASON

the demise of small and local independent sheets, which could not face the rivalry of the rich competitors with their "big names," expensive features, vast prizes, and so on.

It is a significant fact that, while London grew vastly larger, its newspapers grew steadily fewer. Between 1921-1931 the population of Greater London rose by three quarters of a million : that refers only to people dwelling within fifteen miles of Charing Cross. The farther suburbs and "developed" country areas must have added at least another half million. In the same period London's daily and evening papers dwindled tragically. Four great dailies have disappeared within a few years and in the early nineteen-twenties three London evening papers were squeezed out of existence. The population reached by the London evening papers must now be well over ten million : these are served by three journals only. Liberalism failed to keep alive the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Westminster Gazette* : Toryism let its *Morning Post* go down with even less excuse. The same lamentable tendency has been at work among the weekly organs of opinion,

MIND AND MACHINES

where amalgamation of old ventures has been far more common than creation of new ones.

Then there is broadcasting. The impact of this discovery upon problems of government has indeed been powerful. In totalitarian countries it has been an extremely valuable weapon to the dictators. It is even more effective than a controlled Press because its voice is more pervasive and more rapid than the printed word. Naturally the rulers of such countries have simply usurped and monopolised the microphone, at least as far as the expression of opinion is concerned. In the United States "the air" has been left free for commercial broadcasting companies. These derive their income from advertisements and transmit to the public programmes of entertainment and talks on this subject or on that "sponsored" by the advertisers and sponsored because the entertainers or the talkers and their themes are deemed to be attractive. There is a keen competition between the vendors of soap, pills, cosmetics, and so on to provide the liveliest programmes in order to build up good will for the commodity which is, of course, mentioned

LIFE WITHIN REASON

during the programme but is not tiresomely dinned into the listeners' ears. The method is made familiar to British listeners by the programmes sent out from Radio Normandy and Radio Luxembourg.

In Great Britain the inevitable compromise was devised to meet the new invention. A monopoly was granted. But the State did not claim it. A chartered corporation, self-governing but loosely responsible to the Postmaster-General, was created to rule the air and keep it free alike from advertisements, propaganda, vulgarity, and controversy. The average British citizen grumbles at the British Broadcasting Corporation, especially on Sundays when its respectable dullness is the more obvious, but there is no real public demand for a change to the American system and the general tendency among influential people is to think of "sponsored programmes" as being unworthy of their celestial medium. The B.B.C. has been a typical creation of the British middle-class, whose members staff it and direct its programmes of news, of instruction, and of entertainment. The administration is apprehensive of novelty in

MIND AND MACHINES

opinion and far too frightened of the complaining voice. Its main concern is to give good conventional service, avoid grumblings, and administer no shocks. Technically, especially in the case of television, it has been brilliantly progressive ; intellectually it plays for safety (I am writing before the newly appointed Director-General has had time to make his presence felt : he may be going to show more initiative, courage, and freshness of mind than did Sir John Reith). The general policy has been to admit keenly controversial issues only on special occasions. Leading party politicians are granted, in due sequence, a just ration of microphone-time at General Elections, and very important it may be. But, on the whole, broadcasting has not been nearly so important politically in Great Britain as in the United States, where President Roosevelt has owed an enormous amount to his invisible charm and the suave, consoling, reassuring quality of his microphone manner. To reach the housewife in her evening hours is now the first business of the ambitious democrat. On the Continent, where the various Leaders monopolise the

LIFE WITHIN REASON

ability to address their citizens direct, the wireless, of course, is a political instrument of extreme value.

The extent to which dictatorship relies on broadcasting is shown by a German law which makes illegal the removal of the wireless set from the home of a debtor along with other seizable property. It is part of all legal practice to leave the debtor, when distrained upon, with a bed and a roof and the bare necessities of life. It would not be permissible, for example, for an infuriated butcher to tear up a client's drain-pipes and remove them in lieu of cash for chops and steaks. But in England the butcher could take the wireless set. In the Third Reich, no. The wireless set, which links the citizen with the Fuehrer, is deemed to be as much a necessity of his life as a roof and bed. It may not be taken. Otherwise the impoverished might go in danger of missing the verbal and intellectual riches dispensed by authority for his instruction in political and social wisdom. That a word of the Leader's should be missed is deemed to be an intolerable loss. Not to listen is almost treason. By the institution of public

MIND AND MACHINES

apparatus, so that a political speech can be heard in every square and café as well as in every home (and must be heard unless the non-listeners are extremely courageous rebels against authority), the dramatic values of a dictator's voice and personality are given widest possible conveyance. The great orators, who ruled the meetings of a primitive democracy, knew no such power as this. Poor Cleon ! He was born to be the turbulent leader and evil-genius of Athenian democracy, nearly two and a half millennia before his time. How he would have relished the presence of that little metal disc before his mouth which would have enabled him to reach every farmer's boy in Attica as well as every citizen in the assembly !

The influence of wireless, because it inevitably furthers centralisation of power, is bound to be regretted by the champions of democracy and freedom. Communists, being authoritarians and centralisers, have every reason to welcome it and every temptation to make it a monopoly, should occasion arise, of the proletarian dictator. Has Liberalism a Broadcasting Policy for application to British conditions ? I am

LIFE WITHIN REASON

inclined to think that to grant a monopoly in what is, for the most part, provision of entertainment, is a mistake. It may, of course, be argued that there is no effective monopoly because so many B.B.C. stations with mainly divergent programmes are available, while the listener with a powerful set can now always tune in to foreign stations for his recreation. But the fact remains that the determination of entertainment policy is more or less centralised at Broadcasting House and that those who administer a service of this kind, continually criticised on the score of taste and morals by fussy and interfering people, are inclined, even bound, to play for safety and to be extremely careful at the risk of being extremely dull. My experience of American radio programmes is limited, but what I have heard "on the air" and in conversation persuades me that the English attitude to competitive, sponsored programmes is unjustly suspicious. American broadcasting has turned out (or drawn in) far better humorists than has the B.B.C. This is not saying much. Certainly the American programmes, which are not vulgar, show a good

MIND AND MACHINES

deal of witty invention, which is lacking in Great Britain. The desirability of a wireless monopoly in British entertainment seems to me not yet proven.

But the aerial distribution of entertainment, though drollery and dance music are what the average British listener mainly desires and pays for (the American listener pays no licence fee at all), is less relative to our immediate purpose than the broadcasting of news and views and persuasion of all kinds. Would there be an advantage to the freedom and liveliness of British broadcasting if anybody with a cause to plead or a mental hobby-horse to ride were able to purchase microphone-time? Surely not. This hiring out of propagandist opportunity would simply hand more power to wealth. Of course merely "buying the air" would not be of much avail unless the purchaser could also make his message attractive. The listener fortunately remains the arbiter. He is in a far happier position than those who are listening to sermons and speeches in places of worship or assembly. He can turn off the tap of unwanted eloquence and exhortation. (He

LIFE WITHIN REASON

had better not do so publicly under a dictatorship.) He can press the button when bored. He can say "No" in the most effective way possible and with no more effort than the stretching of an arm. But none the less, if "the air" could be bought by propagandists at so much an hour, the power of wealth would be immediately felt. Your rich propagandist, if he had half as much sense as he has money, would arrange to insert his views into an attractive programme. The poor propagandist would be squeezed out altogether. That is a situation both dangerous and intolerable to democracy.

Therefore, unless circumstances are enormously altered, we shall regard the monopoly of radio given to a chartered corporation as the lesser of evils. But we shall also bear in mind the danger to vitality and variety of public opinion implicit in the new machinery of communication. The citizens of the dictatorship countries are getting the worst of that machinery's results. Eternal vigilance is necessary if we of the democracies are to fare better. Those jealous for the rights of labour or

MIND AND MACHINES

of minorities at odds with the State will remember that, in times of crisis, the B.B.C. becomes immediately the mouth-piece of authority. It could be used to doctor news, to prevent fair discussion, and to suppress the minority view as well as to emphasise that of the Government. But practical and immediate remedy there is none. In the case of printed matter we can resolve to support, wherever possible, the independent sheet and to make possible the free utterance of the small and lonely voice. We can give our hand to all those journals who are striving to live outside the big combines. It is an imperative but much neglected duty of the leftward politician to assist, in every possible way, the freedom of the Press : by this is meant not merely the right of rich papers to say what their owners like but the ability of smaller, less commercial journals to exist without constant subsidy, and to say what the owners of the rich papers most probably do not like at all. In the case of broadcasting the "Left," if it accepts the monopolist administration to which we are now accustomed, must be watchful and critical to

LIFE WITHIN REASON

see that monopoly is not abused. With regard to the printed word we can easily and everywhere do some positive good. The method is simple. We have only to be intelligent readers, experimenting in books and journals and supporting, even where we do not wholly agree, the spontaneous expression of unusual or unpopular opinion. It is worse than useless, though it is sadly usual, to turn round when another independent paper or publisher has been ruined or otherwise silenced and say how sad it all is. Lamentation never averts disaster. It is our business to prevent such collapses and demises by the simple and not as a rule expensive procedure of obtaining our news and views from various sources and by applying our judgment to the valuation of this material. A living democracy is a community of readers, who are not mechanical purchasers of mechanical reproductions of conventional views. The existence of many and contradictory small papers and journals is the best possible proof that at least the raw material of a free community is there.

CHAPTER IX

MACHINES AND BODIES

THE preoccupation of political theory in the past with purely political notions has been in many ways detrimental to the development of a political sense in the multitude. To judge by the opinions of some too strictly political minds, liberty consists entirely in the journey, made once in four or five years, to a ballot-box in order to record a vote. That journey, no doubt, is of importance and should never be missed through laziness or the assumption that "anyhow So-and-so is sure to get in and why should I waste energy and shoe-leather in trudging off to record a vote which has no value?" But when all is said and done, the opportunities for practising democratic rights at local as well as national elections occupy an inconsiderable portion of the ordinary citizen's time. Unless a man is actually a

LIFE WITHIN REASON

keen political worker, giving regular portions of his leisure to executive meetings, propaganda, and so forth, the demands made upon his energies by membership of a democracy are trifling. When the ordinary worker talks about his freedom, he does not refer to his vote or to any political weapon but to his "time off," to his evenings, his Saturday afternoon, and his Sunday morning in bed—or on the hill-tops.

For this reason it is vitally important that any scheme of liberal planning should pay far more attention to the problem of leisure than the radical theorists have previously done. It was natural for economists and philosophers of Mr. Gradgrind's way of thinking to dismiss that aspect of freedom which consists of resting and playing, because the hours of labour which they took for granted were so long that the problem of leisure never arose in their minds at all. You need not fuss about the utilisation of holidays when people have no holidays to utilise. Nor does "time off" become a problem when the workers are so tired at the end of a prodigious day's work that they can only fall into a stupor and have no energy left on Saturday to

MACHINES AND BODIES

do anything but sleep through Sunday. For the Victorian Liberals liberty of thought, of suffrage, and of trade were all-sufficient. Liberty to go about, to climb mountains, to drive in motor-coaches, to hustle across country on a motor-cycle at express-train speeds, to visit beauty spots (and leave them a good deal less beautiful), and to enjoy the use of parks and playing-fields and gymnasia was not a form of freedom which concerned the social worker very often. The business was to find people work and wages : the employer who distributed the wages would see to it that the amount of work required did not encourage a gadding or wayward spirit and a self-indulgent habit of life in the toilers or afford opportunities for scattering litter on the mountain-tops, leaving open the rustic gate, breaking down the herdsman's fence, and otherwise devoting to "Great Nature's Open Book" the hours meant for the invoice and the ledger.

It is almost impossible for young workers of to-day to realise the appalling conditions under which their ancestors laboured. To call attention to the hours of a century ago is not to

LIFE WITHIN REASON

pretend that working hours are never oppressive now : shop hours, especially at the week-ends, when many stores remain open until nine at night, are still far too heavy, and involve excessively long stretches of standing, especially for women. Juvenile workers in transport, van-boys and the like, are insufficiently protected. But in order to show how little the Problem of Leisure need enter a hundred years ago into the calculations of a Benthamite reformer, let us consider some of the conditions prevailing when Bentham was at work. During Napoleon's Hundred Days, Robert Owen and Robert Peel, father of the great Sir Robert, drew up a Factory Bill, really the first of its kind. This audaciously forbade the employment in factories of children under ten and limited the work of children over ten to ten and a half hours a day. According to G. M. Trevelyan :

“Manufacturers hastened up to London to protest against the insanity of these two eccentric members of their order. They established before a Committee the point that Owen was an infidel and argued the more doubtful thesis that children were well and happy in the mills. After four

MACHINES AND BODIES

years' delay a useless shadow of Peel's Bill was passed, for cotton only, with no important provision except the prohibition of child labour *under nine*. As there were to be no inspectors the Act was ignored whenever employers and parents joined to break it."

The first effective Factory Act was passed by the Whig Government in 1833, under strong pressure from the now rudely insurgent working classes. This kept children *under nine* out of the factories altogether, except silk-mills, and the important point was the institution of a Factory Inspectorate to see that the law was observed.

A Ten Hours Bill, limiting the daily work of women and youths in certain types of factory, was proposed and passed in 1847 after much bitter pleading that it would be the ruin of the nation. That Act did not apply, of course, to adult males, and there were many industries and occupations which it did not cover. The ordinary male worker continued to slave away for terribly long hours. Even in 1889, for example, the gas-stokers and gas-workers of London were still working a twelve-hour day. Organised by Burns, Mann, Tillett, and Thorne

LIFE WITHIN REASON

the Gas Workers' and General Labourers' Union became extremely powerful within a few months of its creation and demanded an eight-hour day in the gas industry, with the threat of a strike. The directors of three London gas companies considered the situation. One naturally expects to read of a compromise. But strange to relate, the employers not only yielded the whole four hours as demanded but gave a slight wage increase into the bargain ! This shows how scandalous (and also how wasteful) had been the previous exploitation. But what is especially instructive for our purpose is the fact that a twelve-hour day was still being quite unnecessarily worked at that time. The desirability of leisure was generally unrecognised. According to the prevailing opinion of the time, opinion of the poor as well as of the rich, the business of working men was to work and to work so long that they had no desire or capacity to do anything afterwards but eat and sleep.

So radically has the situation altered with regard to working time that the old ideal of a forty-eight-hour week now seems a moderate

MACHINES AND BODIES

demand and has been replaced wholesale in France and more sporadically elsewhere by a working week of only forty hours. This has caused a good deal of trouble because it was ruthlessly applied to the catering trades, obviously a difficult sphere for such an experiment. But the tendency is all in one way. Many British manufacturers have introduced the five-day week. This is not necessarily a forty-hour week because the five working days may be extended and so be rather more than eight hours each. In one metal factory in the Midlands, of which I have some acquaintance, the owner, in consultation with his employees, added half-an-hour to the eight hours already worked from Monday to Friday and abolished Saturday labour altogether, so that the workers, working a forty-two-and-a-half-hour week, were entirely free from five-thirty on Friday afternoon till eight o'clock every Monday. This reform did not prove universally popular : you can never please all tastes, and there were many wives and mothers who resented having the grown-ups of the family lying in bed or hanging about the house on Saturday morning. They saw quite

LIFE WITHIN REASON

enough of them on Sundays ! The problem of leisure always has its personal aspects as well as its political and economic difficulties. After all, Sunday Schools at 3 p.m. have generally been voted a blessing by parents not for reasons of piety only, but because the parson and his helpers then take the children off the hands of their elders. These are quite ready for a nap over the fire after putting down a good hot dinner and washing up an array of greasy dishes.

The productivity of the machine is, of course, one reason why shorter hours are possible and even necessary, if wholesale over-production is to be avoided. With the uncanny efficiency of modern machine-production has come better organisation of productive and distributive methods and a more humane attitude to the employed person. It is in the trades and industries where the machine is and can be least effective that hours remain longest, that is to say in shop-service, domestic and catering work, farm labour and so on. In all these the machine can largely help, if sensibly applied, but it does not alter the conditions of labour so radically as it does in the factory and the

MACHINES AND BODIES

workshop. Here for the convenience of labour-saving by machinery, which so cunningly simplifies and accelerates the making of objects in mass and bulk, we have to pay psychologically : there is a heavy price involved in the abolition of personal craftsmanship. The man, who once applied hand and mind to the construction of an article, now minds the machine which does not the job itself, but a tenth part of the job, a thousand times quicker than hand-labour could do it. Then, also with lightning speed, it assembles the machine-made parts and clamps them together. A machine-minder may not have to use his mind at all. He has merely to avoid mistakes while overlooking or assisting a single process. This sort of labour naturally produces its own particular types of boredom and fatigue. Moreover the tending of the machine may be itself reduced to a quasi-mechanical process and be considered as such, with a view to greater speed and continuity of output, by factory technicians, efficiency experts, and the like. The result of these systems is to eliminate waste of muscular effort or time and to bring the human machine-

LIFE WITHIN REASON

minder or factory-worker into a still closer resemblance to the mechanism which he operates. He is minding a machine, and an efficiency expert, in just the same way, is "minding" him. Doubtless, just as there are big fleas and little fleas, so there are super-efficiency experts seeking to make the other experts super-efficient.

The psychological results of all this are important. As there is less and less need for spontaneity and responsibility in the workshop, so the personality of the worker, in mind and character, is bound to be detrimentally affected. If there is no scope for intelligent attention to the work that has to be "watched" ("minded" is surely a most unfortunate verb for so mindless a form of hour-filling and wage-earning) the result will be blankness of mind or indulgence of fantasy and listless day-dreaming. Who can blame the factory-girl, who has only to perform one simple operation for an entire day, if her attention wanders to the fascination of a film star and to those kingdoms of romance which are summed up by the now so hugely popular word "glamour"? Monotonous

MACHINES AND BODIES

drudgery is no novelty in the life of man. But the conditions of that monotony, an eight-hour day, for example, in a hot and noisy factory amid the ceaseless clatter of machines, are certainly such as to be more oppressive than before. It is the paradox of labour-saving devices that while they shorten labour, they also make it more tiresome to the mind, just as it becomes less tiring to the body. To repeat an easy movement in front of a machine may add much to the difficulty of adjusting one's patience to this routine of life.

Moreover a five-day week, however agreeable to those who know how to enjoy a long week-end and are not left yawning their heads off from sheer incapacity to amuse themselves, cannot alter the nature of the toil which it contains. Process of manufacture continually becomes more detailed and more specialised. Hence the actual expenditure of energy, that is the work itself, is ever more separated from the created object. The person who makes a part of a thing probably never sees the whole and has little or no interest, either as a craftsman or a profit-sharer, in the industry of which he

LIFE WITHIN REASON

is only a semi-conscious member. The employed person in such circumstances is bound to treat the daily round and common task much as he would regard a daily turn on the treadmill. His mind wanders off to the Football Pool, the chances of the Arsenal Team, the probable winner of the 3.30 at Punter's Park, the evening's dog-races, or the furious rivalries of the Dirt-track. The feminine attention may be more pleasantly distracted by the thought of Mr. Gary Cooper's image arriving in the town, and by the week's "glamorous" programme at the local Rialto, Luxor, or Pantheon.

Another complication is caused by the increased education of young people for whom no more intelligent vocation is likely to be available than the repetition of a single movement in front of a machine. Both the time and the technique devoted to popular education improve and there is no doubt that the school-teachers of to-day, exposed as they are to disillusion with the fruits of schooling and still severely handicapped by too large classes and by inadequate premises, are extremely eager to do their very best for their pupils : the promising

MACHINES AND BODIES

child will certainly get far better chances now than he did a generation ago, while children of all kinds and of all types of mental culture receive far more encouragement to use their wits and their fingers and to rely less on clock-work forms of repetition. Yet, when they are turned out of school, the number of available jobs which demand any interesting use of wits and fingers is found to be smaller. It is not only that the factory needs mechanised humanity. The retail-trade, in which personality was once strong, since the shop-keeper relied upon integrity of character, reputation for good trading, and a vigorous individuality to assist him in salesmanship, is now being reduced to a dreary mechanical transfer of goods from one hand to another.

In the old-fashioned shop it was expected (and still is in any shop of quality) that the salesman or saleswoman would fully understand and appreciate the commodities of that particular commerce. The shop-keeper and his staff were there to explain the merits of an article, to discuss the customer's particular needs, and to make suggestions for their satisfaction. Shopping,

LIFE WITHIN REASON

accordingly, was a social activity which both parties might be expected to enjoy, sharing, perhaps, a little gossip of a general kind as well as a conversation about the quality and price of the goods required. Therefore the shop-worker not only could but had to take some interest in his occupation. He or she was a skilled person. Now a great deal of shopping of the more expensive kind is done by telephone, which turns the shop-assistant into an ear and a pencil and makes accuracy of recording the chief virtue of the craft. In the case of poor people's shopping, the conditions become even worse for the salesman—or more usually sales-girl—in the big multiple stores which are now so prosperous because they offer, or seem to offer, such remarkable bargains. Here there is no effort at personal salesmanship. The goods are all displayed for people to look at and finger, and the business of the staff is simply to see that what is taken is paid for and that nothing is stolen. The article, put into a bag, is not allowed in your hand until the money has been passed over. The girls who conduct this dreary commerce are naturally uninterested

MACHINES AND BODIES

in what occurs. They know nothing about the contents of the shop or the quality of the stuff and they are not there to discuss the point. They are quite unhelpful as a rule, and seem, with good reason, to be utterly bored. Once the British were called a Nation of Shop-keepers. Would we still merited so honourable a title ! Next we became a Nation of Shop-assistants. Now even assistant is too good a name for the wretches who stand so long behind the counters of Trash Stores Limited. They are shop-attendants only. In short, the technique of distribution in the contemporary community, like the technique of production, becomes continually more simple and so more tedious and the work involved is ever less worthy to be the occupation of a human being in full possession of his faculties.

There have been and there remain hopeful plans for a wholesale improvement of working conditions which will make the average day's work less mechanical and more interesting, challenging the faculties and evoking a greater sense of responsibility. Some have despaired altogether of machine-production and de-

LIFE WITHIN REASON

manded a return to craftsmanship. But William Morris has left more mark with his wall-papers than ever he did with his philosophy, whose influence was mainly limited to the intellectuals of Socialism. Such counsel is too remote from the realities of a modern community to be of much help in solving the immediate problem of the worker who is inevitably bored with his monotonous work. By all means let consumers employ the hand-worker where they can do so in purchasing for their own needs and so expand the scope of such labour. But the possibility of any comprehensive changes in this direction is very small. Mass-production by machinery has come to stay, at least for many years yet, and our business as practical reformers is to make the best of it by insisting on the use of good design in machine-made articles, by compelling the provision of decent premises, of all possible amenities, and of just wages, and by encouraging the development of responsibility through measures of self-government in the workshop and the factory. After all Nationalisation, whatever its economic advantages or disadvantages, does not, in itself,

MACHINES AND BODIES

alter the conditions of labour and the pains or pleasures to be derived from any series of operations. The State may be a thoughtless and even a tyrannical employer as many a Civil Servant, condemned to work in cramped, dreary, and even unhygienic offices, has realised before now. Merely to reiterate the word "Socialism" is of no assistance whatever in helping the worker to find more stimulus and more satisfaction in the execution of his job.

It is probably true that intellectual reformers, themselves people especially sensitive to the boredom of routine, often attribute to the average attender at office and factory feelings and opinions about work which he does not hold. A great many performers of routine operations are less sick of it than we think they are. They are capable of withdrawing their minds : a cynic might suggest that, not being cursed by Nature with minds at all, they are at no pains to find occupation for brains which are not there. In my own experience, people doing fairly dull jobs for fairly small rewards have often struck me as happier on the whole than intellectuals, authors, artists, teachers and

LIFE WITHIN REASON

so on, whose work ought to be challenging, varied, and attractive. The former, provided they have such security of tenure as is enjoyed by Civil Servants and members of large and well-established firms, go through their day's work without being unduly concerned by the sameness of one week with another. The latter are much more likely to be fussed about their immortal souls and can easily worry themselves into profound misery by contemplation of their own psychological problems. It is certainly incorrect to believe that all the fun in life is on the side of the intellectuals and those whose work is generally regarded as interesting and exciting.

None the less, nobody can enter a modern factory without realising the potential weariness of spirit which may afflict its inmates. We have solved so many of the problems of production, speed, quality, cheapness, and so forth. The greatest problem, the well-being of the human element, has only been met in so far as we have reduced the hours and improved the conditions experienced by the pioneers and creators of the industrial system. We are indeed in danger

MACHINES AND BODIES

of turning out, in a semi-educated and therefore potentially restless and unsatisfied condition, "the living tool," as Aristotle described the natural slave. Can a man be described as a proper citizen of a democracy and fully free, if his work affords little or no scope for choice and change, discovery and promotion, and no prospect beyond the renewal of a narrow round of mechanical movements for the greater part of his waking life? The question naturally arises whether, if most work is of necessity mechanical and repetitive, compensatory freedom cannot be found and increased outside working-hours, hours which have been reduced as far as is compatible with economic sufficiency. The old kind of political theory, which created a purely political concept of liberty, missed these points altogether. The professors of classic liberalism were concerned with man as a political and economic animal only : but he is far more than that. He is a social being with many faculties for development, many sources of entertainment and of pleasure. They overlooked the kind of freedom which might almost be definable as "having fun" and it is this kind of freedom,

LIFE WITHIN REASON

which can properly accompany the most serious devotion to civic duties, that the modern world most lavishly offers to the sustainers and the victims of machine-production. The machine, while it narrows and deadens the conduct of labour by reducing the worker to the status of a machine-minder, does also broaden and enliven the use of leisure, as may be seen in our English countryside at any week-end or any public holiday. Mass-production of cheap motor-cars and motor-cycles may be dull work, but the workers do now find some suitable relief and reward in driving the articles which they make. The drudges of the workshop may now enjoy the freedom of the road : and either in public or in private vehicles they have a mastery over speed and so over space which they never enjoyed before. The machine is a liberator in addition to being a task-master, and it is the obvious business of radicalism to consider the freedoms and social benefits which machines may convey to an industrial nation which is determined to make the best use of its own industrial skill and technical resources.

CHAPTER X

NEW MEANS TO OLD ENDS

IT has been the purpose of this book to challenge the old assumption of a single and simple basis for political speculation, namely the permanence of Homo Sapiens, Man the Reasoning Animal. I have tried to show what disasters and disappointments have been brought upon us by too careless an acceptance of this view and to describe the influence of all sorts of impulses, for which the old political theorists made little or no allowance. No less important have been material and mechanical developments. It is idle to discuss liberty, as the old radical philosophers did, without reference to leisure, since man's freedom in a modern industrial community is more experienced in his hours of ease than in his occasional moments at a polling-booth. In the same way it is futile to consider freedom

LIFE WITHIN REASON

and equality without reference to scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions which have, within our own daily experience, very largely altered social status and enlarged the common opportunity. These increases of equality in what some would dismiss as trivialities and side-lines of life are not to be taken as substitutes for political and economic justice, but they are none the less important. Changes in our way of living may come before changes in our way of thinking and then greatly affect the latter and affect it for the better.

A great many modern inventions, and the methods by which they are applied to human comfort and convenience, are in themselves levelling forces and engines of important social reforms. A man may hit upon a new idea or a new industrial process with no motive beyond the desire to sell his idea or the more selfless (and no less common) passion to add to the stock of human knowledge and skill : he had no thought of contributing to political or social changes or altering the social balance. Yet his discovery may do as much for the cause of human equality as was ever done by a dozen

NEW MEANS TO OLD ENDS

progressive philosophers all scribbling and preaching to the top of their bent. Anything which defeats scarcity or makes the dear article cheap can drastically affect social relations.

Consider one, seemingly trivial, example, the discovery of artificial silk. This has greatly helped to destroy the sense of inferiority based on inferior-looking clothes. That the poor should desire and be able to dress like those who are better off is not just a snob's dream of a bourgeois heaven : to abolish the class-distinctions made patently visible by a different kind of clothing is really to get rid of a great deal of human resentment and frustration. When science discovered, to put it roughly, that the application of sulphuric acid to a tree-trunk could produce a fair equivalent for the costly weavings of Lyons and Milan it did unfortunately prepare the way for factories which are apt to scatter to the heavens and the carrying winds a very unpleasant smell. But it gave "the maid that milks and does the meanest chores" some equality of aspect with her richer sisters. Equality of aspect is a great step towards self-confidence and self-respect. When

LIFE WITHIN REASON

I was a boy the factory girls of Camden Town were distinguishable by the roughness of their workaday clothes and the poor, garish finery of their holiday plumage. They wore a class-label and they accepted all its implications, including its low wage. Now, if you pass by the modern tobacco factory at the hour of release, you could not tell the swarm of emerging girls from the middle-class young women returning to the more prosperous slopes of Hampstead, just as you cannot tell the parlour-maid on her day out from the daughter of the house. That kind of equality, to which the discovery of new dress-materials has contributed a great deal, is essentially a good thing and is not as trifling or superficial as it may seem. It breaks into the caste-system which Toryism still, rather shamefacedly, defends and it dissipates the barren envy and the smarting sense of inferior status.

Some may claim that the art-silk, cinema-deluxe civilisation is simply turning workers into snobs and causing them to forget their eternal rights amid the glitter of their new pleasures : this is quite a false reading of the situation.

NEW MEANS TO OLD ENDS

People are not less ready but more eager to stand up for their dues when they can do so in the same sort of shoes and stockings as their employers. Rags and Radicalism, slums and Socialism do not go together. It is the worst-housed, worst-fed, worst-clothed who are the despair of the Trade Union organiser and the Left Wing canvasser at election times. The fact that Jill can look as good as her mistress does not of necessity make Jill an empty-headed baggage. It has helped to make the self-reliant young working woman of the England of to-day. After all, the vacant, egg-faced creature, with no eye-brows and a mouth painted to the likeness of a horrid gash or wound, is not the only type of feminine wage-earner. There are plenty more who are not bad citizens because they choose to be well-dressed.

The fact is that all suppliers of catering and entertainment have been compelled radically to alter their methods of provision for the poor. The process has been a levelling up, so that the person with only a few coppers to spend has been encouraged to expect as much comfort and cleanliness as the people who are thinking

LIFE WITHIN REASON

in shillings, not in pence. Instead of the working-classes being herded into special food-shops deemed suitable to their station and then feeding off bare benches, rough tables, and coarse crockery, they can now find very much better accommodation. Though a twopenny cup of tea be all their desire, music and marble may be its circumstance. A cynical jester has observed that the new catering makes the poor smart. A Communist may grumble that this new condition of the cinema and cafe "de luxe" is turning the potential class-warriors of his scarlet vision into spoon-fed pacifists content to dally in their gilded chains. The glorification of proletarian squalor, with the implication that the poor should always stick to their class, its symbols, and conditions, is a piece of "Red" sentimentality. What matters is that people should get cleanliness and quality whenever and wherever they spend.

The cinema may be roundly abused by the Left for sapping the minds of the people, dazzling them with a tinsel glamour, and generally implanting bourgeois notions of "a good time." But the cinema has been an equaliser none the

NEW MEANS TO OLD ENDS

less. It has taught the purchaser of a cheap seat to expect as much civility and comfort as if he were buying a dear one. The old Victorian theatre was essentially a class-institution. The poor went into pit and gallery by separate doors: they went down dreary stone passages or up dreary stone stairs to take their seats on hard benches. They had no foyer in which to meet during intervals. They were carefully kept apart from the occupants of stalls and circle. The cinema, being both typical and productive of equalitarian conditions, gave the poor the same rights as the rich. Naturally those who paid least did not have the places deemed best, but they were under no stigma of poverty; they shared a decent entrance with the rest and had a really comfortable seat for their money. However much the popular cinema be criticised for its provision of mental dope, it has done something to break up the caste-system in social arrangements and amenities. It has treated the sixpenny public with respect instead of deflecting it to a shabby side door and a knife-board seat and saying that this is good enough for the likes of you.

LIFE WITHIN REASON

Far more valuable has been the liberating effect of the motor-car and motor-bicycle. Altogether insufficient attention has been paid by sociologists to the influence of cheap transport on the public health of mind and body. The ability of the worker to use his increased leisure by really discovering his own country is a new and an excellent thing. The motor-cycle combination offers an extraordinary bargain in transport to the owner-driver, the price of *char-à-banc* travel plainly does not outrun the ability of myriads of working-class families to meet it, and the number of apparently poor people who can keep (or share) a motor-car for their outings is also obviously very large.

The social implications of this new mobility of the masses are enormous. The car, for example, has driven its way through the obstructive gloom of the old Scottish Sabbath with its unhealthy incarceration at week-ends of people who were in shops and factories all the week. Let anyone who remembers the Scottish Sabbath of a quarter of a century ago now watch the traffic pouring out of the central

NEW MEANS TO OLD ENDS

Scottish towns—and what deplorable slums many of those towns still are !—and proceeding to the beautiful sands and bays along the Firth of Forth. On a fine Sunday there is an absolutely continuous stream of working people who get a day of bathing in sun and sea and seem to have lost entirely the old inhibitions of the severely Sabbatarian Scotland. Opinion there about proper conduct has radically altered ; in my opinion it has altered for the better. The point is that the change of view was made by a machine. The Scot was not a conscious rebel against the old routine. But when he had entered his car he suddenly found himself charging through the old restrictions. His subconscious desire for more freedom was gratified. Transport opens up new worlds in more senses than one.

The general public of to-day does enjoy a freedom which was once severely limited, the freedom of escape. "The air" provides it, for broadcasting offers to almost the whole population, through radio-purchase or radio-rental, continuous noises throughout the day and most of the night, noises which may be

LIFE WITHIN REASON

harmonious or horrific, instructive or amusing, noises of news and views and clowns and dance-bands, noises which come to the poor as to the rich, and supply, for good or ill, a means of forgetting the workaday life at a licence fee of a third of a penny a day. In a previous chapter I commented on broadcasting as an aid to dictatorship in its formation and control of opinion. It is only fair to add that it is an economical aid to democracy in the passing of a private hour, proffering the best of music (or the worst of jokes) for those who need do no more than turn a knob and then can enjoy the additional and delicious privilege of silencing both music and jokes with another turn. In this case the machine has again acted in the popular interest and has widened and enriched life for many who, by reasons of poverty or illness, could not get about and enjoy the sights and sounds of the world and its company. Before long television may further, and astonishingly, enlarge these opportunities without undue cost.

Then again the increase, almost the universality, of holidays with pay would be far less

NEW MEANS TO OLD ENDS

advantageous if the scope of the holiday ended with the gin-palace at the end of the street or with the customary trip by train to a well-known "resort." Naturally the tendency of the new democracy to be "over the hills and far away" is resented by those who regard solitude as their particular property. Let us admit all that can be said against the new traveller, that he is often untidy, a "litter-lout," a crass fellow who only leaves the motor-coach to enter a public-house and who might just as well stay at home and do his drinking without the cost of a drive, a sheep-like person who joins a flock and is herded to the nearest "beauty spot," which is not so beautiful when he and his kind have done with it. State the case against the "motor-coacher" and week-end driver or motor-cyclist as hard as we may : the fact remains that a great deal of health and happiness, previously denied to the city-bound or slum-bound millions, has been opened up by the discovery and popularisation of the petrol-engine. For little more than fifteen pounds, a new "motorised-bicycle" can be bought now which will do 140 miles to a gallon of petrol.

LIFE WITHIN REASON

To be up and off and fifty miles away from Coketown, at large on moor or wold or down in less than a couple of hours, is a real freedom which is enormously appreciated by hordes of those who rarely used to leave Coketown at all. The machine has levelled-up the use of that freedom which comes when work is over and it is only selfishness which deplores the general out-pouring of the town into the countryside, and the invasion of the old solitudes by those who enjoy it.

But the same Radical policy, while it welcomes these new, un-political liberties of leisure and of recreation, will take very good care that everything is not submitted to the risk of being over-run. On the one hand the denial of "access to mountains" has been a public scandal, especially in such counties as Derbyshire where a beautiful ledge of moorland separates the huge industrial areas surrounding Sheffield and Manchester. The moors are grouse-moors and the owners have kept up a strong opposition to their use as lungs for the city-workers, however harmless that use may be to the birds who are the August gun-fodder. On "the Peak" itself,

NEW MEANS TO OLD ENDS

i.e. the plateau more accurately known as Kinder Scout, there are fifteen square miles of mountain country of the noblest kind, easily reached by the young workers of Lancashire and Yorkshire, but possessing no public footpath at all. That sort of anti-social barring and bolting of the countryside, all because of some possible disturbance of game-birds, must be ended in any campaign for social freedoms. If the walkers stick to the paths—and they ask no more than the use of tracks—the disturbance would be almost nothing. The organised walkers of this country are themselves particularly eager that no harm should be done by their activities, and do really welcome action against any unruly or careless individuals who abuse their rights of way.

On the other hand the machine's levelling-up process, welcome in so many ways, must be combated for the common good where it means surrender of the peace and solitude which the unmechanised traveller, on horse or foot, craves and has a right to enjoy. Access to mountains by all means : but not, in all cases, access to motor-cars. Let the built roads be

LIFE WITHIN REASON

numerous where needed : let them be good, broad, well sign-posted, and secure : but in so small a country as ours let us also set a strict limit on building new roads in lonely places, to which wasteful custom public authorities are strangely prone. There are always some curious people who believe that progress will be served by driving metalled highways over hitherto untraversed hills and through passes still left to the ancient trackways of pony and of man. It would be monstrous, for example, if the Sty Head Pass, leading over the noblest and highest of English mountains, from Borrowdale to Wastdale, were to be turned, as is intermittently demanded, into a roaring speedway for the motorist, with a Scawfell Service Station and a Gable Road-House made joyous by Ray Razzle's "Swing" Team, the Keswick Kids, and the Seathwaite Hotcha Six. Yet that is exactly the kind of thing that will happen, if the road comes.

The imperative need of our time is to use the new powers of science applied to mechanism widely but with discretion. There are times and places when it must be denied altogether.

NEW MEANS TO OLD ENDS

Surely we must retain in our country some kind of strangeness and beauty and loneliness which can only be achieved by taking effort, some prize of muscular tenacity and of relish for wind and weather, some goal for the traveller's old skill and endurance and lore of map and compass.

The walker has seen the roads made unbearable for his pastime and his pleasure. Is he to be hounded off the tracks on the commons, "honked" at on the very downs themselves, and finally chivvied up the Cumbrian hills or wildest Pennine by the ever-invasive motorist? There must be some wastes left to such sounds as only the curlew and the peewit make, some reaches of desolation where a wanderer must find his own way out and not rely on ringing up for a taxi, if the darkness or the mist descend. The victory of petrol has brought many advantages to comparatively poor people: it has conferred large liberations on those who were once city-bound. All the more reason then for seeing that the victory is not abused by the kind of County Council which cannot see a solitude without turning

LIFE WITHIN REASON

it over to the surveyor and the engineer in order that land may be "developed" and progress served.

The reasonable life accepts all inventions on their merits : it is as tolerant of new things as of new ideas. It recognises how enormously the new things may affect the old theories of life : novelties which assist material equality promote fresh ideas of status between classes and sex. The laboratory and the workshop may do as much for political theory and human equality as all the speeches that were ever made and all the tubs that were ever thumped. But the price of our liberty is still eternal and ubiquitous vigilance. The fluidity of social life has increased enormously in the past quarter of a century and in that new national glut of speed and glitter, of cheap and luxurious pleasures, we must remember the rights and ensure the liberties of those who like something else. The National Parks, to which many look for public recreation of the sanest kind, must not become national car-parks. To find a desert and leave it a fun-fair is too easily confused with progress. There is a place for Giant Dippers, as Blackpool

NEW MEANS TO OLD ENDS

knows, but not where the dippers of the beck
and burn bow to the lonely torrent. We
must cultivate our gardens, as Voltaire advised :
he did not include bear-gardens in his counsel to
mankind.

CHAPTER XI

REASON WITHIN REACH

DEMOCRACY and dictatorship both impose duties as governments must. But there is a vital difference in the type of duty enforced. The free citizen must, in theory at least, think and choose what sort of orders he will obey : the inmate—surely that is the just word—of a totalitarian State must not think, may not choose, and receives his orders from above. Why was the statement about the free choice of the free citizen qualified by “in theory at least”? Because the units of the modern democracies have become so large that all sense of individuality is easily lost, the importance of the vote is diminished, and the act of choosing becomes so less attractive to many of the citizens that they will not bother to visit the poll. “What is one voice,” they say, “among millions ? It’s a nasty cold day : the fireside

REASON WITHIN REACH

is warm : my opinion will make no difference either way." Hence sixty per cent. of the electorate is called "quite a good poll" in a Parliamentary election : between thirty or forty per cent. is a fair average in the local conflicts which have much less publicity.

Democracy began as government by public meetings. Of the free citizens of Athens, a minority of the city's male inhabitants, a certain number possessing leisure and inclination, gathered to speak, to listen, and to vote. It was extremely easy in those conditions to feel the reality of freedom, the challenge of responsibility, and the pleasure of being a governing person.

The number of free citizens of Attica, the State of which Athens was capital, during the fifth century B.C., *i.e.* the great period of the world's first democracy, has been much disputed. Some scholars put it at 50,000, others as low as 30,000. (A hundred years later, after the wars and the State's decline, the census of Demetrius recorded the number at 21,000.) Many of these were farmers, living outside the city of Athens, who would only rarely be able to attend political

LIFE WITHIN REASON

gatherings in town. Many others would be too busy, some too bored to listen to speeches in the Ecclesia. In any case, as in early Rome, the numbers were manageable : the idea of government by public meeting was, in some sort, realised.

But now the British electorate is enormous; a single constituency, that of Hendon, recently contained 160,000 voters and will probably rise to 200,000, six or seven times as many as the freemen of Periclean Athens. In the great democracies of to-day the thousands replace the tens, the millions the thousands. "What is one among so many ?" the single voter may exclaim. "The pretence of self-government is idle. In any case I can only choose between two or three politicians of whom I know nothing, projected at me by the party machines, which I do not trust, talking to me in a lingo which I scarcely understand, and pouring out promises which they will certainly break."

That kind of cynical talk is easy. It has been going on ever since democracy was invented and the politician was described as a man striving to make the worse cause seem the better and

REASON WITHIN REACH

probably succeeding. But the fact remains, when all this grumbling about a farce and a swindle has been uttered, that life in a democracy is fundamentally different from life under a tyranny. You can feel it in the air. You can apprehend it in a word. You can hear it in a laugh. Yes, most powerfully in a laugh. An American journalist, who recently visited Russia, told me that what most struck him on his return to London was the conversation of two men who woke him up by mending the roof of his hotel. They stopped in their work ; they talked ; they laughed. He said that not for weeks had he heard such a thing as laughter during the day's work. The Russians only laughed under licence, as it were, in theatres or circuses and places appointed for the deed.

Why then have so many millions of people been ready to abandon a seemingly more pleasant way of living in order to live grimly amid the spies and inquisitions and bully-ruffian methods of dictatorship ? To escape from anarchy, as a rule, or from the fear of anarchy implanted by the anti-democratic conspirator. Or they seek to recover national strength and spirit and

LIFE WITHIN REASON

discipline after a defeat. Some of those now apparently content with dictatorship never knew democracy at all, but only a travesty of it. Rights, once surrendered, are not easily recoverable. When you ask a man of iron to come in and save you, granting him absolute power as the reward of his salvationist efficiency, it is idle to expect that his ruthlessness will suddenly turn to reason, and that he will soon substitute, in his domestic relations, the cooing of an electoral address for the crash of the mailed fist and the murmured courtship of an eager Parliamentary candidate for the roaring of a military command. Those who cross the threshold of dictatorship soon hear the door bang behind them.

In a democracy the majority may rule oppressively : so too can a single and magnetic individual or a clever group use the constitutional machinery as a lever to lift them to exceptional heights of power. Agreed : but even so there is infinitely more general liberty, more freedom from the odious activities of the informer, more ability to think and speak one's thoughts, in the least liberal democracy than

REASON WITHIN REACH

there is or can be in the best of dictatorships. We need not repeat the slogans, the catch-words, the oratorical battle-cries of the emotional democrat : we simply know, by experience, that behind these fine words there is some fineness of the spirit, a temper of life, a generosity and a tolerance which are worth preserving.

To do it we must continually struggle to retain the integrity, the independence, and the civic meaning of the small unit. "Small-town" is now an adjective of derision. In social matters the word betrays the metropolitan snob : in politics it betrays the fool. Democracy, and with it the life of freedom based on reason, began as a small-town thing. Athens was a small town, which led other small towns in resisting and defeating the barbaric might of the Persian tyrant and his hordes. Compared with the great cities of the East, cities of the Babylonian scale and splendour, it was a mere hamlet. But its name is imperishable, because it stated a case, practised its theories, and was reason's light amid the darkness of the outer world. That it abandoned democracy after one astonishing century is true : but the cause

LIFE WITHIN REASON

of its corruption was its growing Empire among the Mediterranean Islands. Imperialism bred greed, greed bred rivalry, and rivalry bred the insane folly of the long Spartan war. It was a war most popular on the Left. There is a lesson for our times in that. It is not only Conservatives who breathe fire and rattle tin-sabres. The pugnacious champions of an "ideology," to use their own cumbrous and dreadful word, can be as great a menace as the simple military man.

The enlarging of the unit was fatal alike to the new democracies of Athens and of Rome. The business of digesting empires was beyond their young physique. As small-town communities they added to the lustre of man's early record as a thinking, imagining, creative animal. As Empires the one crashed almost immediately, while the other imposed upon the conquered world a peace of Cæsar which had much in common with the peace of death. The British have made a prolonged effort to combine Imperial might with democratic control, but their Empire is so various in its types of unit and administration that it is impossible to

REASON WITHIN REACH

generalise about its success. There is almost nothing in common, save the titular headship of the British Sovereign, between a virtually independent democratic Dominion and a Crown Colony made up of mainly coloured population, who may be living in nominal freedom but are economically serfs, forced to leave home and to labour in mines or plantations in order to meet the unusual and severe burden of imposed taxation.

From such a discussion as this the Empire must be omitted because of its immense complexity. At home the issue is how to combine a sense of civic responsibility with the huge new aggregation of industrial units, the vast constituencies, and the colossal electorate, problems which are naturally more acute in the United States than in Britain. Can existence within such a monster as modern London be also life within reason, in any full and fruitful political sense ?

Well, London and the horrid likes of it must certainly be stopped. The distribution of population, which really means the distribution of industry, can no longer be left to chance and

LIFE WITHIN REASON

drift. Democracy must accept a strong line and quick, far-reaching decisions in this most urgent matter. London is not only a strategical absurdity in the age of flight : it is a menace to physical health and to political vitality. When one belongs to a city, which has swollen dropsically into a featureless province of brick—the Home Counties may soon be all home and no county and London mean everything from Brighton to St. Albans and from Southend to Reading—it will be well-nigh impossible to maintain any of the local patriotism which is so essential to the vitality of self-government. This vast proliferation of reckless building, consequent on the development of outer London as a factory area, has created a mass of urbanism which is almost ungovernable because it overflows all the old boundaries and thus leaves every administrative problem to conflicting and possibly jealous and hostile authorities.

So it happens that the average worker in the middle of London spends some two hours every working day and anything from four to ten shillings every working week simply in getting to and from the home and the office or workshop.

REASON WITHIN REACH

He or she travels in dismal discomfort at the rush hours, very often standing and jostling in horribly crowded carriages and so helpless against exposure to infection whenever an epidemic is about. Road-transport becomes ever slower, the streets noisier and more rank with fumes. The workers waste money and endurance in these long daily journeys : in the crowded coaches it is difficult to do anything but read head-lines and glance at pictures, which is certainly not an aid to a reasonable comprehension of the day's news. The competition for central offices and warehouses, in cities of vast population, plays into the acquisitive hands of ground-landlords and, by inflating site-values and rents, at once hampers all business by the inevitability of crushing "over-heads."

It is impossible to discover a single argument in favour of such gigantic cities : the proper limit of population, that which will permit a healthy civic life with full amenities of the arts and easy recourse to the countryside, seems to lie somewhere between a third and two-thirds of a million. Civilisation has been defined as the art of living in towns. Such a town would

LIFE WITHIN REASON

be large enough to establish a powerful individuality of its own : it could encourage the best in education, science, and the arts : it could be socially comprehensive, versatile, and alert. On the other hand it would not be a bricky wilderness, shapeless, impersonal, unlovable, a mere welter of suburbs, a swarming-ground of strap-hangers, like modern London.

It is indeed both astonishing and deplorable that the control of population and of urban growth should have been so completely ignored in the past. Political and commercial liberty should not include the freedom to scatter factories and suburbs at will, for such liberty may very soon destroy the liberties and welfare of others, as inhabitants of Greater London have recently discovered. What is needed is not more suburbs, but new towns. The new town would be planned both in site and lay-out, zoned, de-limited, and equipped for habitation both as residence and working-place. Time and health and money would no longer be wasted on immense daily journeys. Sport and exercise would be easily available : work could be reached cheaply and hygienically, by foot or

REASON WITHIN REACH

cycle. Moreover, no less important, the life of a true community could there be fully and freely achieved instead of being sunk in the lifelessness of the unplanned, uncontrolled, unbearable Urban Province which the Age of Anyhow has allowed to grow up quite as wantonly and squalidly round the mouth of the Thames as ever it did by the Mersey or on the Pennine slopes. Observe the immediate sequel to a new arterial road or by-pass. It is always "confusion's masterpiece."

The necessary kind of control will not be easy to institute and to exercise under our present system of national and local self-government. But its creation is of the first importance. The urgent need is total prohibition of circular commercial expansion round towns already possessing more than a certain population and the alternative settling of all such future development in satellite new towns of limited and dispersed population. The idea of the Trading Estate was recently introduced on Tyneside at Team Valley and in South Wales at Treforest, to relieve extreme regional economic depression. All new in-

LIFE WITHIN REASON

dustrial developments should and could be thus assigned to similar estates, according to local need and manufacturing convenience.

The great difficulty of our time is that, while economic conditions demand continually bigger units, political conditions need smaller ones. Commercially all rational people are, in their ideals at least, cosmopolite : we see and resent the hindrances, the waste, and the follies of boundaries, of customs-barriers, and of tariffs. But as democrats we know that cosmopolitan organisation, however excellent for the liberation of trade from the illogical and oppressive bondage of nationalism, will be a deadening influence in politics, unless it is mitigated by extraordinary measures of devolution. The larger the nation, the harder it is to make self-government effective. In a World State, bureaucracy would, almost inevitably, be supreme : the forms of self-government would become extremely barren where the voter was one among hundreds, or even thousands, of millions. His real political life would be lived in his own area. It is worth noting that the countries where the democratic system seems to have most reality and to be

REASON WITHIN REACH

working most smoothly for the common advantage are the Scandinavian kingdoms ; the joint population of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, about twelve and a half million people, is not much greater than that of the London and Home County area. The entire population of Denmark is less than that of the inner part of London governed by the L.C.C. In national units of this size the voter can really apprehend and appreciate his own personal association with power and responsibility. He is a citizen, not a cipher. That is one reason why we may look with favour on self-government for Scotland and Wales. We need not pledge ourselves to romantic nationalism and all its mythology when we assume that the people of both nations would have a fuller civic sense and a richer public life if their representatives stayed nearer home and were in close and continual touch with their own folk. This is practical politics, not cultural high-falutin'. Voting Scottish has no essential connection with talking Gaelic.

We cannot escape the facts of national boundaries and national population. But we

LIFE WITHIN REASON

can, within limits, decentralise : we can check the further growth of swollen cities and even, perhaps, submit them to a course of "reducing." That means National Planning and such Planning, it may be protested, means drastic interference and a huge extension of bureaucracy. But we should not be too frightened of the word "bureaucrat." Where officialism uses an Official Secrets Act to threaten liberty of expression in matters far beyond questions of National Defence, the democrat will be zealously vigilant. But the democrat, if he has any eyes at all, does also fully comprehend the appalling disadvantages, not to mention the strategical blunder, of unco-ordinated and unchecked urban development. Here, by limiting the liberties of commercial adventurers and the profits of landlords and speculative builders, we may guarantee the greater freedom of society in days to come.

The terrible disillusion which has befallen the believers in rapid and rational progress during the last quarter of a century has been, I hope, in some sort analysed and explained. So too has the eagerness of defeated, hungry, and bewildered millions to deify the magnetic

REASON WITHIN REACH

and successful adventurer and to accept any discipline, however narrow and even savage, in order to escape from anarchy and chaos and the humiliations of their State. The reasonable life seemed not long ago to be within reach on a large and expanding scale. Toleration appeared to be as obvious and easy a form of human decency as not knocking one's neighbour into the gutter or not spitting on the floor of his house. That, we know, has been tragically altered. But it is at least possible that now, in the beginning of 1939, we have reached the trough of tyrannical unreason's wave. To escape from it we must somehow create as strong a passion for the peaceful and liberal life as the dictators can rouse for racial intolerance and the bellicose ideals of national ascendancy. The task, we have seen, needs drastic social readjustments as well as a new discovery of sympathy, imagination, and the patient will to make the national being the national well-being. It has been impossible, in a book of this compass, to particularise : we have dealt with general ideas of human nature, with the general gains and losses which scientific invention has

LIFE WITHIN REASON

brought to society, and with general measures for the rescuing of the democratic spirit from fatigue and despair.

“For a nation to love liberty, it is sufficient that she knows it : and to be free, it is sufficient that she wills it,” was a saying of Lafayette’s very dear to Thomas Paine. Those men belonged to the early Radicalism which had morning in its eyes and saw “human nature being born again.” We cannot share all their hope : but we appreciate their passion. For the man of reason can be as vehement of spirit as the slave of the new idolatries, personal and tribal. Knowledge and will can yet defeat and outlive ignorance and fear and hate. But there must be great force of feeling behind them. The Athenians, who founded the first City of Reason, were not ashamed to call themselves its lovers. If life within reason is ever to be man’s earthly portion, he must not be too chilly in its praise and pursuit. The enemy makes no such tactical mistake. He is hatred’s lover, black passion’s slave. In commending the possibly unexciting ideal of a patient and tranquil liberality to the eager young, contemptuous

REASON WITHIN REACH

of middle paths and golden means, we must give them matter for a passion too. It is often and unfortunately true, as Chekhov observed, that "love, friendship, and respect do not unite people as much as a common hatred of something." But one can be fiery in calm causes. So let us be ready with a challenge, which is also a paradox, and summon the rising generation to a fine frenzy of cool common sense, to the noble fevers of a tolerant and sympathetic life, to the greatest ecstasy of all, the ecstasy of being sane.

POSTSCRIPT

THE major part of this book was written just before, during, and after the European Crisis of 1938. Events since then have scarcely assisted faith in the immediate and widespread restoration of rational rule. Asked, most humbly, to play the game of live and let live, the autocrats have not played. Appeasement has not appeased. Chamberlainite appeals to the dictators to "come under the old umbrella" have been spurned by those whose sense of manners is rather to spit on the poor gamp's surface than to be cosy and friendly underneath it. Diplomacy, once the most solemn, courtly, and consequential of human occupations, has degenerated, as far as Europe is concerned, into a slanging-match. The haughty eagles of Germany and Italy may be growing in talon-power, but their daily diplomatic behaviour suggests that these raptors might as well be entitled the Greater and the Lesser Backchat.

The appalling persecution of the Jews in

POSTSCRIPT

Germany, and to a less extent in Italy, which followed the murder of a Nazi diplomat by a distracted Jewish boy in Paris, has naturally stiffened opinion everywhere against colonial and other concessions to those Powers whose conceptions of justice seem to be nothing but vengeance run wild or the edicts of sadistic mania. For cold-blooded cruelty, in a time of nominal peace, there can be few equals to this campaign in all the records of the crime, follies, and blunders of mankind. Judged by these standards of persecution Herod and the Turk fade away into the tyro class. One is naturally inclined to wonder what Mr. Gladstone would have said in 1938—more still, to wonder what he would have done.

Reason may well suspect that the rational forces in other countries are becoming more and more horrified at this betrayal of all the elements of civilisation. To us, so much of it, however true, remains well-nigh incredible. Is this a part of us, of human nature? We go about our ways staggered by the discovery that our foolish support of French post-war policy in bullying and humiliating the pacific Weimar Republic

LIFE WITHIN REASON

should have produced such monstrous results by way of patriotic reaction. The lesson for the larger future is obvious enough : never abuse a victory. If you cannot exterminate your enemies, you had better come to merciful and politic terms. But for the present the problem of policy is obscure. There is still the League of Nations. But the League labours under double handicap. It was discredited, on the one side and from the first, by its association with Versailles and its too obvious resemblance to a League of Conquerors, and, on the other, by its subsequent betrayal from within and by the lack of strength and courage to challenge aggression when aggression was comparatively weak. Can such a body, with its flouted powers and its appalling record of flatulent evasions and timid delay, now recover the nerve, the unity, and the power to challenge the aggressor when he is strong ? Or must we despair of Geneva as a lost cause and start again to build a Democratic Alliance, which makes no pretence to universality, but is a business-like association of nations who realise that business is business in diplomacy as elsewhere, and have

POSTSCRIPT

tired of the League's round of futile assemblage where the sound of the speeches, which so unfailingly explain why nothing can be done, just serves to conceal the noise of axes dubiously ground and of logs unprofitably rolled.

There are two possible futures for the League. It may dwindle into a Benevolent Association which passes respectable proposals without the faintest hope that any further notice will be taken of them. It seems virtually to have reached that stage already. Walter Bagehot said long ago that the danger to the British House of Lords lay not in abolition but in atrophy and a similar fate may await the League, whose Swiss home may offer quiet and decorous September lodging for the eldest statesmen and become, like our own Second Chamber, a last infirmary of noble minds. Or else it may resolve honestly to admit its lack both of universality and of executive power. At present the average member of the League can have no sense of any protective power. It is comparable only to a police force which, when informed of burglars in the house, telephones to the victim that the matter will be thoroughly investigated by a

LIFE WITHIN REASON

Temporary Mixed Commission, called to meet after the holidays and expected to report before next March, when a recommendation not to buy stolen goods may be passed and not obeyed !

When this weakness has been properly acknowledged, it may be possible to construct an armed League of those nations which believe in the rule of reason backed by law. This League would be useless unless it really had force ready to use and the resolute will to use it. It would need an executive in more or less permanent session, empowered to strike and strike immediately where the breach of international law was deemed to have occurred. It is idle to talk about International Police unless you have a Chief of Police with ample force at his disposal and ample executive power in the employment of force. That is to say, a League of Nations can only be effective when its member-nations are prepared to abandon their status as sovereign bodies and accept without question or delay all appropriate duties and discipline in the service of International Law. The urgent point for those who would escape from the present international anarchy and realise that the plight

POSTSCRIPT

of the world is hopeless without some reasonable regimen imposed on its component states is to decide on a policy with regard to the present League.

Can a body, which in any case is only half a League, is contemptuously treated by its major members, and has grossly betrayed its minor ones, a body to which no victim of violence would now look for any real help, be reanimated and reinforced? Has the good will of Geneva been so entirely dissipated that we must endeavour to start entirely afresh? If the latter, had we not better give up the original conception of universality altogether and work for an effective and fully armed alliance of such nations as accept and are determined to enforce the provisions of international law? There are various policies which have a basis of reason. Total non-resistance is logical in its own absolute way. So is a powerful, equipped, vigilant, and swiftly striking International Police Force. So is an armed alliance of nations strongly holding certain ideas about the conduct of international affairs. But the forcible-feeble compromise which was the Versailles-Geneva

LIFE WITHIN REASON

League (rapidly becoming more feeble than forcible but still with just enough status to make its failure the more serious) has not only small ground in reason, but has lost much of what sentimental support it once possessed. It is going to be very difficult to arouse general enthusiasm for a reformed version of the present League.

Meanwhile the case for vigilance at home is stronger than ever. Fortunately fears have been aroused, even in Parliament, and we can rely on a fair number of alert democrats, in and out of Westminster, to provide a close guard over attempted governmental manipulation of opinion by suppressions, either directly ordered or indirectly hinted and suggested, of news and views in the Press, in the cinema, or "on the air." Misuse of the Official Secrets Act and private pressure upon the cinema companies, whose news-reels are now so important a contributor to public information and opinion, have been strongly challenged and are unlikely to be operative at least in times of peace. A rational and radical approach to penal reform is another good sign. Could we in Great

POSTSCRIPT

Britain but have peace in our time and devote to vital things the colossal wealth, skill, and energy now devoted to violence, life within reason would also be well within grasp. In our national being, at any rate, liberal counsel advances, and the amount of common sense and common kindness in ordering social relations does slowly increase. It is consequently the more appalling that elsewhere rage should have so far triumphed over reason and frenzy be trampling toleration to the ground.

January 1939.

THE LIBERAL BOOK CLUB

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The aim of the Liberal Book Club is a simple one : It is to provide a platform for all who seek the truth and believe in the tenets of democracy and freedom. It believes that never before has there been a time when Liberalism and the principles for which it stands have been more urgently needed than the present. It will do all in its power to forward the principles of freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of action.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

The Liberal Book Club can be made a powerful instrument for the dissemination of the "liberal" point of view. It will depend on the Members of the Club whether this instrument is used to its fullest advantage. Each local Liberal agent will do all in his power to lend assistance, and it is suggested that Members of the Club should approach him with the object of founding Discussion Groups, the members of which would meet to discuss the monthly selection. These Discussion Groups can be made the spear-head of the local attack on the entrenchments of political reaction.

It is important, too, that Members of the Club should talk about and recommend these books. It is well to remember that they are not obtainable by the ordinary public and it should be stressed, therefore, that to read these books it is essential to join the Club.

YOUR OBLIGATION

If the Liberal Book Club is successful in fulfilling its aims and obligations—of banishing ignorance, fear and prejudice from the minds of the ordinary voter—it will become a movement of paramount importance in the fight for Freedom and Democracy. But it can only be successful if it receives the full and active support of every Member. If the principles of Liberty are worth fighting for, then we must fight with every weapon at our command.

THE LIBERAL BOOK CLUB

The APRIL selection will be :

FUTURE FOR DEMOCRACY

by RAMSAY MUIR

An analysis of the dangers arising from the growth of totalitarianism and a discussion of the way in which they should be met. The author recognises that great social changes must be made if democracy is to be justified and an attempt is made to show how economies, liberty and social justice can be attained without surrender to the dictatorship of big business from which we now suffer, or to the omnipotence of state control, which socialism involves.

The MAY selection will be :

POWER IN MEN by JOYCE CARY

Liberty is not an abstract idea but free power of action. In history it has produced, by conflict first law and then state democracy ; it will produce inevitably world government and democracy. This process, if checked, achieves itself by war and revolution ; if understood and rationalised, by democratic organisation, peacefully.

The JUNE selection will be :

LEADERSHIP FOR PLENTY

by COMYNS CARR

Mr. Comyns Carr challenges a number of popular fallacies which cloud much of our current political discussion. He puts forward a plan for rationalising our social services. He attacks the prevailing cult of planning "By restriction for scarcity and dearthness," and advocates "Planning by expansion for plenty and cheapness." In particular he associates this doctrine with far-reaching proposals for reducing unemployment permanently to a minimum.

THE LIBERAL BOOK CLUB

The JULY selection will be :

THE CONTOURS OF LIBERTY by TOM HARRISSON

Mr. Harrison, co-leader of the well-known Mass Observation Movement, will draw on the enormously rich material which Mass Observation has collected in order to show the heights and depths of those liberties we now enjoy and seek to preserve. How real are they ? He will also analyse how Liberalism works and when it fails ; and how democracy is working—not as its leaders say it is working, but in the eyes of the ordinary voter.

The AUGUST selection will be :

THESE MEN MAKE POLITICS by A. J. CUMMINGS

Never before has the ordinary voter realised to what extent his own destiny is bound up with the success or failure of politicians. It is human leadership which really counts nowadays and political movements must be focused upon men, upon personalities. Mr. A. J. Cummings, who has known practically every Post-War English and foreign Statesman of note, gives a number of clearly-etched portraits of some representative politicians in order to show their place in contemporary politics, and their relationship to the rapid march of world events.

The SEPTEMBER selection will be :

OWNERSHIP FOR ALL by ELLIOTT DODDS

A bit of property is what every Englishman wants. It is what, Mr. Dodds contends, he ought to have ; since property is the bed-rock of liberty. In Britain to-day sixty per cent. of the property is owned by one per cent. of the people, while more than three-quarters have little or nothing that they can call their own. Such a state of affairs mocks our boasts of British freedom. The remedy is, not to abolish private property, but to distribute it. Mr. Dodds analyses the causes of the present maldistribution of property and puts forward practical proposals for righting it. A real democracy can only be made out of free men who enjoy the independence of ownership.

